



MAJOR ADAPTATIONS



Foundations

THE NATIONAL BODY FOR
HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCIES

Quality Assessment Framework for Home Improvement Agencies V2 – July 2010

Major adaptations objectives

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We have included examples of services provided at levels A and B to give an indication of what is expected of services delivered to such standards.

These examples are not intended to act as a checklist or to prescribe the services that home improvement agencies would be providing if they were judged by validation officers to have an ‘excellent (A)’ or a ‘good (B)’ service.

Therefore, when assessing compliance with level A and B standards, it is acceptable to cite alternatives to the listed examples if these demonstrate that the standards are being met by other means.

Major adaptations module

Home improvement agencies play a leading role in providing support for people who need to make major adaptations to their home.

The majority of the funding for this work will be from the local authority's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget and the home improvement agency will need to have a close working relationship with the local authority in order to progress grant applicants through their system as smoothly as possible.

The combination of having a disability and facing the prospect of major building work taking place can put extra stress upon a client, so it is essential that this work is handled as sensitively as possible.

The DFG process is complex and in many areas the speed at which cases progress can be affected by short-term shortages of grant funding, resulting in delays and queuing taking place.

Therefore, it is essential that home improvement agencies are able to address the individual needs of each person they seek to support, and to progress the required work as quickly as possible at the least cost to the client.

The agency can play a central role in delivering a local authority's adaptations policy, combining its casework and technical skills and linking into other services the agency provides, such as handyperson services.

The focus of this module is the manner in which the client is progressed through the system and whether they feel positive about the experience. As DFGs move across into individual budgets it will be important for home improvement agencies to demonstrate that their services are effective and of the highest possible quality.

Scoring method

The assessment framework contains 4 objectives, each containing a number of clauses (total number of clauses = 9).

During self-assessment the organisation needs to evidence its performance in each clause as being grade A, B or C (A being the highest grade).

A = 3 points, B = 2 points and C = 1 point

Not being able to evidence at least Grade C will result in a fail.

There is no overall score for the module – you will receive either a pass or fail, and your scores for the module will not be published, but you may share these with 3rd parties if you wish.

The following table shows the number of points needed to obtain grade 'A', 'B' and 'C' for each objective.

Objective MA1: The client journey

Clause	Number of points & grade		
1.1 Access to the service	6-9 = C	10-15 = B	16-18 = A
1.2 The assessment visit			
1.3 Maintaining contact and communication			
1.4 Adding value			
1.5 Risk planning			
1.6 Closure and follow-up			

Objective MA2: Technical issues

Clause	Number of points & grade		
2.1 Good systems	1 = C	2 = B	3 = A

Objective MA3: Strategic engagement

Clause	Number of points & grade		
3.1 The home improvement agency as a strategic hub	1 = C	2 = B	3 = A

Objective MA4: Managing performance

Clause	Number of points & grade		
4.1 Managing performance	1 = C	2 = B	3 = A

The 'Performance' section is optional and will not be formally scored but will give an agency an idea of how they compare to similar agencies on the specified performance measures.

Objective MA1: The client journey
How the client accesses the service. Whether they are dealt with in a comprehensive and sensitive way and are enabled by the home improvement agency to control as much as possible of the process.

1.1 Access to the service

<i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The local authority that the home improvement agency is based in has a clear written procedure and guidance for people enquiring about adaptations. If this is missing, the home improvement agency has produced its own local guidance on this subject and has lobbied the local authority to produce a public guidance document.</p> <p>The client is given the choice to opt out of using the home improvement agency service if they do not require it.</p> <p>The client is informed about any prioritisation system in use and how to appeal if they feel their ranking is too low in the system.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
<i>Level B</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The home improvement agency works with the local authority and others to promote awareness of the help available to people who may need major adaptations to their homes.</p> <p>The home improvement agency is working with the local authority to achieve a service that is available to people in the social housing sector who may need assistance with major adaptations.</p> <p>The home improvement agency actively promotes its services to groups of disabled people, their carers and other organisations which come into contact with disabled people.</p> <p>The home improvement agency is positioned, and supported by the local authority, to play a leading part in guiding people through the major adaptations</p>	

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<p>process, including DFGs.</p>	<p><i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i></p>
<p><i>Level A</i></p>	<p><i>Evidence</i></p>
<p>The home improvement agency offers assistance to all disabled people, irrespective of their tenure, age or income.</p> <p>Written information is available in all formats required by the clients.</p> <p>The agency has researched good practice preventative approaches.</p> <p>The service the agency provides is seen by all stakeholders as effective, well run and able to meet the demands made upon it.</p> <p>The agency collects data on how people access its service and is able to report on this. The agency uses this information to ensure that there are no significant groups who are not accessing the service (for example, people from a black or minority ethnic background, those in tenanted accommodation, and those in 'better off' areas are all accessing the service as required.)</p> <p>The home improvement agency follows a clear policy in relation to the needs of different groups and individuals who need to access the service. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • families with disabled children • children in foster care • people with more than one impairment • people with sensory impairments • people with learning disabilities • people with mental-health problems • people from ethnic minorities • people with a deteriorating illness • people discharged from hospital • people in hospital who are waiting for discharge, and • households with two or more disabled people. 	
	<p><i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i></p>

1.2 The assessment visit

<i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The initial visit is made by appointment, and the home improvement agency offers information about the service.</p> <p>The visit is made by an experienced member of staff within the time limits indicated by the agency. Any delays on the day of the appointment are relayed to the client by phone or email.</p> <p>The client is made aware that they are able to refuse the assessment by the occupational therapist or the services of the agency.</p> <p>The agency has a list of average timescales for the main categories of adaptation work it undertakes.</p> <p>The client is informed of the current waiting time for a grant and is given information on alternatives to a local authority grant as a means of paying for the work.</p> <p>The client is given a provisional means test, either during the visit or shortly afterwards, to assess how much, if anything, the client may need to pay towards the cost of the work.</p> <p>Information on how to contact the home improvement agency and the contact details of the caseworker is sent to the client after the visit, with a summary of what was agreed and the next steps.</p> <p>The client is given clear information about expected timescales, the possible amounts of grant assistance and the conditions of such grant assistance.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

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<i>Level B</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency has a clear agreement document, written in plain English, which indicates the expectations and responsibilities on both sides. It is explained to the client and the client is given a copy for future reference.</p> <p>The caseworker is able to calculate client contributions to local authority grants and advise on possible benefits and allowances that the client may be entitled to.</p> <p>The caseworker always tries to reduce risk to the client by advising them on the likely cost of the various funding options. Any options which involve interest-bearing loans are not advised upon, and the client is told to use an IFA or discuss the matter with their family.</p> <p>The caseworker is aware of the social model of disability and their approach is to centre the service around the needs of the client, not the local authority.</p> <p>The caseworker acts as the client’s key worker and is the person to be contacted for information (unless the client is advised otherwise).</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
<i>Level A</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency has researched the availability and likely cost of relevant IFA services in their locality (or has set up an agreed charge for the service with local IFAs).</p> <p>The agency has investigated with the OT service if they will accept the recommendations of an independent OT if there are long waits for the authorities OT assessment. They also have a list of such independent OTs and their charges available for clients.</p> <p>The agency provides a housing options service which includes advice and assistance on ‘moving on’ options.</p> <p>The agency’s caseworkers have received training as ‘trusted assessors’.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

1.3 Maintaining contact and communication

<p><i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i></p> <p>The client knows how to contact a named person at the home improvement agency and is aware of the agency’s opening times.</p> <p>The client is told how to complain about the service they are receiving from the agency, who they should complain to and how the complaint will be dealt with.</p> <p>The agency has in place a system of tracking the progress of cases and is able to identify cases which have become delayed and communicate the reason for the delay to the client.</p>	<p><i>Evidence</i></p>
	<p><i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i></p>
<p><i>Level B</i></p> <p>The agency’s premises are accessible by wheelchair or have a means for clients who use wheelchairs to visit the agency to discuss the progress of their case.</p> <p>The client is left a folder with the agency’s name on the front, for all the correspondence to be put into.</p> <p>The agency takes responsibility for co-ordinating the work of everyone involved in progressing the work and holds regular case conferences to review progress. They agency lets the client know if any timescales are likely to slip.</p> <p>The agency will communicate with the client in a format acceptable to them (for example, in large print, or sent to a relative or carer, nominated by the client, who is able to translate or relay the messages to the client).</p>	<p><i>Evidence</i></p>
	<p><i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i></p>

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<i>Level A</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency has a list of target times for each stage of a DFG process and a system which automatically flags up when a client case does not meet the target, and contacts the client to discuss this delay.</p> <p>The agency is part of a local agreement which commits all the stakeholders (local authority, occupational therapists, builders on the agency's list) to jointly agreed service standards, including average waiting times, prioritisation methods, and an independent complaints system if internal procedures are not able to resolve a complaint quickly.</p> <p>If the agency works in a county setting, it is part of a county HIA group which produces shared information leaflets to promote the service.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

1.4 Adding value

<p><i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i></p> <p>The home improvement agency acts in the interests of the client at all times and always seeks the most appropriate and affordable solutions for the client’s housing problems.</p> <p>The agency always looks at maximising the client’s income by checking their entitlement to benefits and allowances.</p> <p>The agency seeks to progress work in a timely manner at the lowest cost to the client.</p>	<p><i>Evidence</i></p>
	<p><i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i></p>
<p><i>Level B</i></p> <p>The agency takes full responsibility for ensuring that the client is always kept fully informed and that they are able to participate in all aspects of the progress of the work if they want to.</p> <p>The agency does not limit its interest in the client to grant-funded adaptations but will inform the client of other services it offers which may be of assistance.</p> <p>The agency is able to signpost the client to all related sources of help and disability groups.</p> <p>The agency is able to inform the client’s carers of any entitlement to assistance to support them in their caring responsibilities.</p> <p>The agency will, with the client’s permission, make a survey for any HHSRS hazards present in the home and report to them any category 1 hazards and possibly help towards eliminating them.</p>	<p><i>Evidence</i></p>
	<p><i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i></p>
<p><i>Level A</i></p> <p>The agency ensures that the client is aware of the right to ask for a reduction in their council tax banding following an adaptation if this applies.</p>	<p><i>Evidence</i></p>

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<p>The agency will ensure there is a proper package of assistance regarding any necessary servicing or repairs to the adaptations installed, including any necessary follow-up.</p> <p>Six months after the work has been completed, the agency asks the client if the adaptation has been beneficial and what, if anything, they could do to improve their service to other clients. The agency acts on any such feedback received.</p>	
<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>	

1.5 Risk planning

<i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The home improvement agency makes a provisional risk assessment for every major adaptation, and ensures that the contractors they use have adequate accident and defect liability insurance.</p> <p>The agency always seeks at least two quotes for adaptation work, unless they have in place an agreed schedule of rates with contractors.</p> <p>The agency informs the client of any implications that major work will have on their household insurance before the work starts.</p> <p>The agency is clear that they can only provide information (not advice) about loan options.</p> <p>The agency will ensure that the information they pass to third parties about their client is done with their consent and is in the client’s interests.</p> <p>The agency will ensure the client is aware that they must declare all relevant information when applying for any means-tested assistance to pay for the work they require.</p> <p>The client has the work specification and any associated contracts which they sign and date, and the agency keeps a copy of them.</p>	
<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>	

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<i>Level B</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency holds regular meetings with contractors to ensure they are aware of the client service standards required, and the agency monitors the contractors against these standards.</p> <p>Contractors are given feedback on client opinions on their work in order for them to improve their performance.</p> <p>The agency monitors average costs of work undertaken and investigates the reasons for major variations in cost.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
<i>Level A</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency will commission, usually on a three-year cycle, an external business appraisal of its services in order to drive through continuous improvement in its services and to validate its services to commissioners.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

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and finish dates, the scope of work, costs and funding sources.	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
<i>Level A</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
The client is contacted six months after the work is completed to make sure all is well and check whether any further assistance is required.	
The clients are engaged and influential in ensuring their feedback is acted upon to improve the service. The home improvement agency can evidence changes to the service which have been made as a result of the feedback.	
Clients are given the opportunity to join a service focus group or join the steering or management group as appropriate.	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

Objective MA2: Technical issues
Home improvement agencies need to provide a high-quality service in drawing up specifications and plans which meet the client’s needs. They need to manage the risks on behalf of the client so that work is completed accurately, on time and at the agreed price.

2.1 Good systems

<i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The technical officers are aware of the role of the trusted assessor.</p> <p>The technical officers will seek to ensure the aspirations of the clients are clear to all parties in the adaptations process.</p> <p>The technical officers listen to the client’s needs and gives them choices and the likely costs of each of these.</p> <p>The technical officers are professionally trained or have a long experience in designing schemes and managing building contracts.</p> <p>The technical officers are familiar with AutoCAD.</p> <p>The agency always ensures there is an appropriate contract in place between the client and the contractor when building work is undertaken in a client’s home, and the client is informed of their liabilities under the contract.</p> <p>There is a code of conduct in place which contractors must sign up to.</p> <p>The agency has clear procedures, understood by contractors, for adequate site liaison and supervision.</p>	
<i>Level B</i>	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The technical officers have received training as trusted assessors or trusted technicians.</p> <p>The technical officers are able to draw up proposals using AutoCAD.</p>	

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<p>The technical officers continue their professional development by attending technical officer meetings and other similar learning opportunities.</p> <p>The technical officers hold regular meetings with the contractors to discuss how to improve the service and update them on client requirements and monitor their performance on a regular basis.</p> <p>The technical officers manage a list of contractors which is reviewed annually. The technical officers hold annual meetings with the contractors to discuss how to improve the service.</p> <p>The technical officers are prepared to advise on accident prevention and HHSRS audits, and they offer energy efficiency advice if appropriate.</p> <p>The technical officers ensure that all work is completed to the same high standard, irrespective of whether it is publicly or privately funded.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
<i>Level A</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The technical officers have access to an electronic library of adaptation schemes and are able to produce an isometric drawing of a proposal to show the client how a scheme will appear when completed.</p> <p>The technical officers have set up a system of unit rates for the most common adaptations, and this is reviewed annually.</p> <p>The technical officers ensure that the client always has a choice about who does the work if the client wants to use a particular contractor.</p> <p>The technical officers are networked to other technical officers to share good practice and share news about products and procedures (for example, through the senior technical officer group).</p> <p>If there is a long waiting time for an assessment by an OT and the case is not complex, the technical officers explore the possibility of supporting the client to self-assess their needs and requirements. The technical officers are trained as 'trusted technicians' to pass the assessment for approval by the OT or grant officer.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

Objective MA3: Strategic engagement
HIAs are well placed to act as a co-ordinator for the local authority Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process. This requires careful relationship management and putting the client’s needs at the forefront of the service. The home improvement agency needs to address issues regarding funding shortages. It also needs to position its services to be attractive to clients who are managing their own financial allocation through individual budgets.

3.1 The home improvement agency as a strategic hub

<i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The home improvement agency has the capacity to provide a service for clients requiring adaptations.</p> <p>The agency is aware of the local authority’s legal responsibilities under the legislation governing DFGs.</p> <p>The agency has a working relationship with the local occupational therapy service and is available to offer them advice on technical issues.</p> <p>The agency has a working relationship with the local authority grant officer service and has an understanding with them as to the agency’s involvement with the DFG process.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
<i>Level B</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency manages the majority of the local authority’s DFGs, or has developed expertise in one area (for example, adaptations for young people).</p> <p>The agency convenes a regular review to chase the progress of DFG applications.</p> <p>The agency finds solutions to, or helps reduce, any delays in the system. For example, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a prioritisation system • using private occupational therapists • using a handyperson to provide immediate help or relief • using alternative funding sources. 	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

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<i>Level A</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency has developed innovative use of resources. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recycling stairlifts • bulk purchase agreements • using recyclable 'pods' for extensions. <p>The agency is part of any group set up to improve the DFG system in the local authority or county authority, and has contributed towards improving the process.</p> <p>The agency links up telecare, minor adaption and major adaptation work into a seamless service available to clients.</p> <p>The agency is fully aware of the personalisation agenda and has taken steps to position its services so as to be known and attractive to people with individual budgets.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

Objective MA4: Managing performance
The home improvement agency monitors its performance and benchmarks against similar agencies.

4.1 Managing performance

<i>Basic minimum requirements for an adequate service (performance level C)</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
A database is used to capture relevant client information and performance data relating to the cost of work and time taken for the work to be done. The data captured can be formatted to report to stakeholders on the performance of the home improvement agency (including the SP workbook reporting requirement).	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>
<i>Level B</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
The agency uses a suitable database (such as FEMIS) to capture information on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the number of enquires 2. the number of visits 3. client details (including disability and ethnic background) 4. details of clients' financial circumstances 5. details of their property and tenure 6. details of the work done 7. details of funding 8. details of outcomes (for the SP workbook returns). 	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

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<i>Level A</i>	<i>Evidence</i>
<p>The agency uses a purpose-built database which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. tracks the progress of work and flags up work which is not meeting set timescales 2. records clearly all additional income gained for the client 3. records the results of client satisfaction feedback and what action is taken as a result 4. tracks handyperson jobs by nature of work carried out, recording jobs done and clients helped separately so the agency can report on both 5. generates returns for the SP workbook and the HIA Outcomes Framework. <p>The agency regularly benchmarks its performance in key areas against other similar home improvement agencies, or is in a benchmarking club with other local home improvement agencies.</p> <p>If the agency is in a county setting, it aligns its data recording with a countywide approach so that all home improvement agency data in the county can be compared.</p>	
	<i>Pass / Fail / Unsure</i>

Self Assessment form

Use this page to record the grades for each clause and calculate the grade for each objective

Objective MA1: The client journey

Clause	Clause Grade	Number of points (A=3, B=2, C=1)	MA1 Grade (Points 6-9 = C, 10-15 = B, 16-18 = A)
1.Access to the service			
2.The assessment visit			
3.Maintaining contact			
4.Adding value			
5.Risk planning			
6.Closure and follow-up			
		Total points =	Grade =

Objective MA2: Technical issues

Clause	Clause Grade	Number of points (A=3, B=2, C=1)	MA2 Grade (Points 1 = C, 2 = B, 3 = A)
1.Good systems			
		Total Points =	Grade =

Objective MA3: Strategic engagement

Clause	Clause Grade	Number of points (A=3, B=2, C=1)	MA3 Grade (Points 1 = C, 2 = B, 3 = A)
1.HIA as strategic hub			
		Total Points =	Grade =

Objective MA4: Managing performance

Clause	Clause Grade	Number of points (A=3, B=2, C=1)	MA4 Grade (Points 1 = C, 2 = B, 3 = A)
1.Managing performance			
		Total Points =	Grade =

Performance indicators

This information will be compared against other similar home improvement agencies.

1	Value of work per year for each technical officer employed	
2	Time taken for work worth up to £5,000	
3	Time taken for work worth between £5,001 and £10,000	
4	Time taken for work worth between £10,001 and £30,000	
5	Time taken for work worth over £30,000	

Appendix 1: Indicative time targets for DFG funded work

	High (days)	Medium (days)	Low (days)
Referral to allocation/response (including screening, prioritisation and preliminary test of resources form issued) <i>(Where complex needs are identified some time may elapse before the need for an adaptation is clarified and the process proceeds.)</i>	2	2	2
Assessment carried out within:	3	15	40
Recommendation and report prepared and forwarded	2	5	5
Notice to disabled person of recommendation and application form issued	2	2	2
Home visits to assist in completing form, measure up and consult on proposals	5	15	30
Preparation of schedule and drawings	10	20	30
Second home visit to confirm proposals	5	15	30
Issue specification to contractors, concurrently seek confirmation of title, etc	3	5	5
Await return of tenders, concurrently seek completion of full test of resources	30	30	30
Evaluate tenders, calculate and check DFG, issue confirmation of DFG	3	5	5
Date to start not exceeding:	10	30	60
Time on site for an average DFG of £5,000 <i>(Time on site will depend on the size and complexity of the work, but allow five days per £5,000 value for general building work and fewer days when the value includes major items of equipment such as stairlifts.)</i>	5	5	5
Inspection on completion	1	2	5
Secure guarantees and documentation, give advice on repair and maintenance, consult disabled person on satisfaction, consider any remaining needs.	2	5	10
TOTALS	83	151	259