



**Foundations**

THE NATIONAL BODY FOR  
HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCIES

Annual Review  
2010/2011

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# Foreword

Foundations has been the national body for home improvement agencies (HIAs) in England for the past ten years. Home improvement agencies are usually local organisations, part funded by local authorities (LAs) and health bodies, who offer older, disabled and vulnerable people advice and practical support to repair, maintain, improve and adapt their homes, enabling them to live as independently as possible.

Their services are available in over 85% of LA areas in England and last year they assisted over 245,000 vulnerable households in England and arranged for the funding and supervision of building work to 32,000 homes to the value of over £110m as well as providing over 130,000 handyperson jobs. This annual review looks back at 2010/11, highlighting the successes and achievements of the sector and of Foundations. Building on this, the review also looks at what's ahead for us and the sector, giving examples of where the Foundations team are exploring new partnerships, innovative practice and the broadening of sector services.

Despite continuing financial uncertainty for providers, the demand for HIA assistance continues unabated. By 2030, the number of people over 85 will double. Based on current trends, 67% of this group will live with a disability or a limiting long-standing illness

and spend over 80% of their time at home. Much more work is needed to ensure these people can enjoy a safe and comfortable old age living in their homes.

Foundations will maintain its focus on the quality of provision, support the expansion of the HIA provider market, strive for skills improvement of those working in the sector and support commissioners grappling with funding cuts. Throughout 2011/12 we will be looking for ways to elevate the profile of the sector with key policy makers and stakeholders, and provide support to the sector by building an evidence base for the effectiveness of HIA interventions. We will also focus on effective and accessible communications which cascade the good practice and examples of innovation that exist nationally.

*Andrew Chaplin*  
Director of Foundations

Local authorities with handyperson service	<b>97%</b>
Local authorities with a home improvement agency service	<b>85%</b>
Households assisted	<b>245,000</b>
Handyperson jobs completed	<b>130,000</b>

# The policy landscape

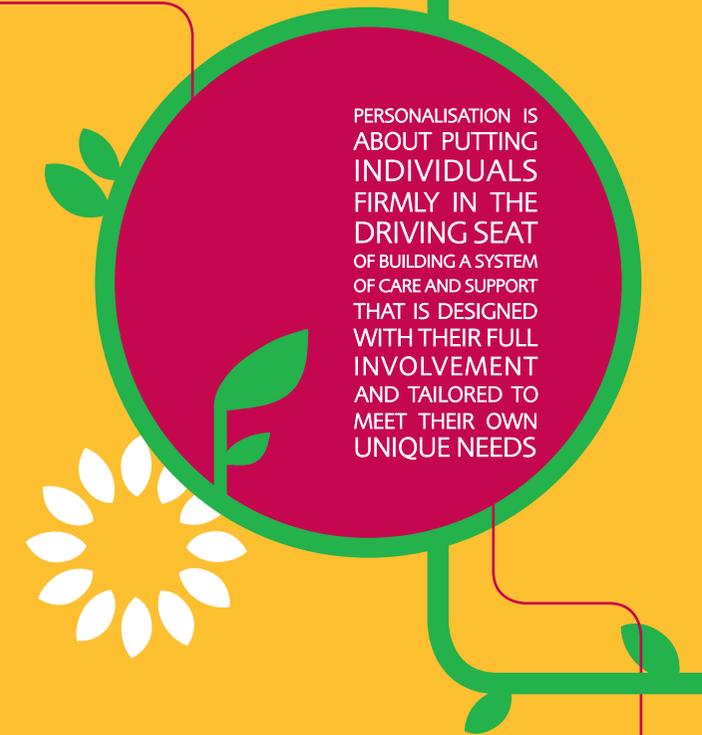
As the national body for home improvement agencies in England, we are commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government. We provide a range of services for agencies and their commissioners, working to develop and support the sector. We also assist in communicating and interpreting the vast related policy agenda to the sector.



## A new government

With a new government came a shift in focus. The coalition government published its comprehensive spending review on 20 October 2010. The review set out spending for the whole of this Parliament across all government departments. Key aspects of the review directly affected the sector, including the following plans:

- Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) central allocation to rise to £180 million for 2011/2012 and to become un-ringfenced capital grant
- Supporting People programme funding to be maintained at similar levels, but as an un-ringfenced element within LA formula grant
- funding for 'Housing Strategy for older people', which includes handyperson services, to receive £15.5m in 2011/2012, with continued funding until 2015, also rolled into LA formula grant, and
- cessation of central funding allocation for private sector renewal, although local authorities are still able to provide funding to this area if judged to be a local priority



## The power shift – localism and personalisation

Localism is about achieving a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people, and includes new rights and powers for communities and individuals. Personalisation will bring about the complete transformation of adult social care, and is designed to make universal services such as transport, housing and education accessible to all citizens. Individuals will receive their own budget and can decide how, with whom and where they wish to spend that budget in order to meet their needs and achieve their desired outcomes. These changes to evolve more local, even personal, control and purchasing power will naturally have a fundamental impact on providers such as HIAs.

# How are HIAs doing?

Home improvement agencies assist vulnerable people to repair, improve, maintain or adapt their homes. Sometimes known as 'care & repair' or 'staying put' agencies, their preventative services reduce costs to other public services such as health, social care, housing and the Police. They make homes safe to return to following a stay in hospital, assess for and remove trip hazards to stop falls and accidents, tackle poorly maintained and dangerous housing stock, and strengthen home security to protect householders from burglary and other doorstep crime.

Although some agencies may only employ a handful of staff, each year home improvement agencies deal with a quarter of a million enquires and provide practical support help around 160,000 elderly, disabled and vulnerable people. Handyperson services are a recent success story for the sector and these small but incredibly impactful services delivered positive outcomes for 130,000 people last year – by only fixing a new curtain rail or mending a shelf, providing 'that little bit of help' is often the crucial difference for older people between maintaining a positive outlook and feeling they can no longer cope.

## The commissioning and funding challenge

Decisions taken by the new government to address the current fiscal situation have created uncertainty for many HIAs. LA commissioners have been grappling with how to manage reductions in overall funding and increasing demand for services. In two tier authorities, support for the joint commissioning of HIAs by county Supporting People and district Housing teams is under stress due to reductions in private sector housing spend. Over a third of HIAs are seeing cuts in funding of between 5 and 20%. In some areas Supporting People commissioners have levied a flat reduction on all contracts as a way of not shutting any services. In other areas the withdrawal of grant funded work will lead to associated cuts in the HIAs fee income from these grants.

During 2010-11 Mears PLC acquired almost half of the HIA local authority contracts which had previously been held by Anchor.

## Funding of HIAs during 2010/11

Annual revenue funding reported by HIAs has increased from £39.9m in 2006 to £62m for 2010/2011. However, a recent survey revealed that the sector is expecting a reduction in traditional revenue funding of around 20% going forward. Handyperson services have seen an increase in funding from £3.7m in 2008 to £9.2m in 2010/2011.

The revenue funding of core services showed a reported increase of 55% since 2006. There were also significant increases in the value of core funding provided by Adult Social Care and Primary Care Trusts.

LOW COST, HIGH IMPACT  
SERVICES,  
MANCHESTER  
CARE & REPAIR  
WAS FOUND TO PROVIDE  
£1.70 OF BENEFIT  
FOR EVERY £1.00 OF  
SERVICE COST.  
THIS INCLUDES  
SAVINGS OF OVER  
**£600,000**  
TO HEALTH AND  
SOCIAL SERVICES



# Foundations



2010/11 has been a busy and successful year for Foundations and we have continued to represent the sector at a strategic level with government and other stakeholders. This often involves offering analysis to help guide policy development. For example, in Summer 2010 we presented compelling evidence of the effectiveness of HIAs and handypersons to inform the comprehensive spending review process. At the end of the financial year we gave evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Housing and Care, whose enquiry “Living well at home” focused on many of the issues facing HIA providers and clients. Over the year we engaged with the new administration on other aspects of policy such as welfare reform, the Health and Social Care Bill, the Localism Bill, the Green Deal, and changes to the Warm Front scheme.

Spreading the word about HIAs and the vital issues close to sector, Foundations has been active giving presentations at a number of national conferences, including several CIH and NHF events. Our published guide on supporting vulnerable tenants in the private

rented sector contained useful summaries of good practice which can be adopted well beyond the HIA sector. We also produced a number of brief “how to” guides to help the sector address the new policy imperatives.

2010/11 has also seen the commencement of a partnership with the Ministry of Defence which will lead to a vital role for HIAs in providing adaptations into the homes disabled service personnel.

During 2010/11 we undertook press and media campaigns to raise the sector profile. These focused on housing options, re-ablement funding, and handyperson services. Foundations also had a sustained presence in trade and national press and media outlets including Guardian online, Inside Housing, Local Government Chronicle, Community Care and Housing 24. Foundations has continued to highlight the work of HIAs and this can be seen in the 5% increase in enquiries from the previous year, illustrating the growing recognition of the sector and of Foundations.

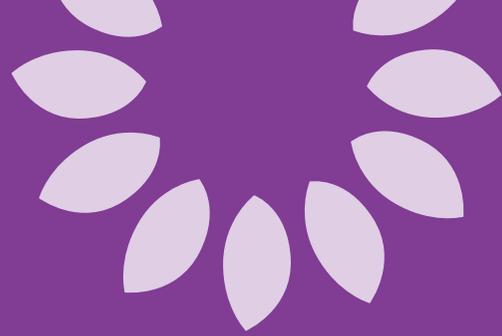
THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY  
**210**  
HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCIES IN ENGLAND, AND AROUND  
**85% OF**  
RESIDENTS IN ENGLAND HAVE ACCESS TO THEIR SERVICES

## Driving up quality – the Foundations Quality Mark

In 2010 Foundations Quality Mark gained accreditation with the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). The core module of the Foundations Quality Mark was accredited by Sitra as a validated service assessment process. This reduced the burden on HIAs who previously would have had to undergo two separate validations but can now obtain both the Foundations Quality Mark and the Supporting People QAF by way of a single assessment process.

During 2010/11 there were 24 Quality Mark validation visits. Many of the validation visits were carried out in the West Midlands, with 11 agencies in the West Midlands Kickstart Partnership successfully gaining accreditation during 2010/11.





## Supporting commissioners - Foundations Advisory

Despite the current economic climate it has been a record breaking year for advisory work. We have undertaken projects in a variety of different subject areas, not merely limited to HIA commissioning activity. We have provided advisory expertise on options appraisals, business planning and tender support to a range of clients. There was a wide range in the size of projects undertaken, from developing a single policy document for Origin Housing Care & Repair, through to major outputs such as our project work on the completion of the restructuring of HIA services in Gloucestershire.

Our pool of associates grew considerably over the year, attracting individuals with expertise in HIAs, Supporting People, housing related support and personalisation. Advisory work continues to be a key component of our service offer. We have been able to build on the support offered by our regional development managers and provide a bespoke service for commissioners and providers alike.

## Supporting commissioners - Foundations Training

Foundations Training also had a good year. This year we trained over 230 people on open training and almost twice as many on in-house training courses. We have streamlined the open training offer during the course of the year to focus on what people want. FEMIS courses remained popular, as did our Housing, Health and Safety Rating System courses. Basic House Construction also remained a favourite. Next year we have a new range of open courses that we are looking to launch in Summer 2011.

## Handypersons

During 2010/11, Foundations operational support team took on the co-ordination role for the three regional handyperson coordinators and we founded much stronger working relationships within these teams to allow better joint working and information sharing. Evidence gathered illustrates that the number and scope of handyperson services has increased substantially. Alongside this, the funding of handyperson services has increased substantially, with significant increases in funding from Adult Social Care, Primary Care Trusts, Fire and Rescue Service and Police Community Safety and Crime Reduction Programmes.

## Case study

Essex HIA

During 2010/11, Foundations was able to provide Essex commissioners with consultancy support which added both expertise and capacity to their HIA commissioning process. Our consultant spent a considerable amount of time engaging with providers and funding partners. He was able to act as honest broker as well as offering challenge to all parties on aspects of the commissioning. In terms of expertise, help to design the service was paramount. This included assistance to design the service specification and guidance on targets, bench-marked costs, etc. Assistance with a needs-based distribution of funding was also valuable.

## What was achieved?

With Foundations support, two Essex district authorities moved from the position of potentially not renewing HIA contracts to having an approach to tendering which should see the delivery of stable and consistent HIA services. The tender will target the provision of advice, information and practical response, support for complex needs (personal and technical) and preventative services. These services will be more consistent and will move towards a future service model to be developed over the next two years.

# Home Improvement Agency Awards

Sponsored by:  
**Stannah**

The Awards provide the opportunity for recognition and celebration of the sector and the people working in the sector. The ceremony, sponsored by Stannah Stairlifts, was held in the House of Commons on Monday 1 March 2010. It was attended by several senior members of parliament and government Ministers, including Care Services Minister Phil Hope MP, Public Health Minister Gillian Merron MP (both Department of Health), and Baroness Kay Andrews OBE. The Awards were highly successful, with all the judges commenting on the high standard of entries and the breadth of services and expertise demonstrated.

Agency of the year was presented jointly to Care & Repair Leeds and Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency (pictured below).



Joint Agency of the year winner: Care & Repair Leeds

Other Awards presented at the ceremony and the winners:

- Excellence in delivering major adaptations awarded to Sunderland Home Improvement Agency
- Excellence in providing support and advice awarded to Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency
- Excellence in delivering handyperson services awarded to Manchester Care & Repair
- Excellence in engaging with health and care awarded to Blackpool Care & Repair
- Excellence in commissioning home improvement agency services awarded to Warwickshire County Council
- Special recognition award awarded to Sir George Young MP
- Outstanding individual awarded to Sandra Mardell



Joint Agency of the year winner: Lincolnshire Home Improvement Agency

# HIA Annual Conference 2010



Foundations hosted its annual conference in Birmingham and the event was attended by over 270 delegates. The conference focused on themes of quality, innovation and efficiency to provide the platform for best practice sharing and discussion of development opportunities amongst delegates. The event explored the potential for housing support services to respond to new government strategies following the release of the comprehensive spending review.

The conference opened with the theme 'Responding to the challenges' and saw thought provoking presentations from Neil McDonald of DCLG and Sue Adams, Director of Care & Repair England. One highlight from the event was the contribution of John Timpson on how to run and grow a community based national company, 'The Timpson Way'.

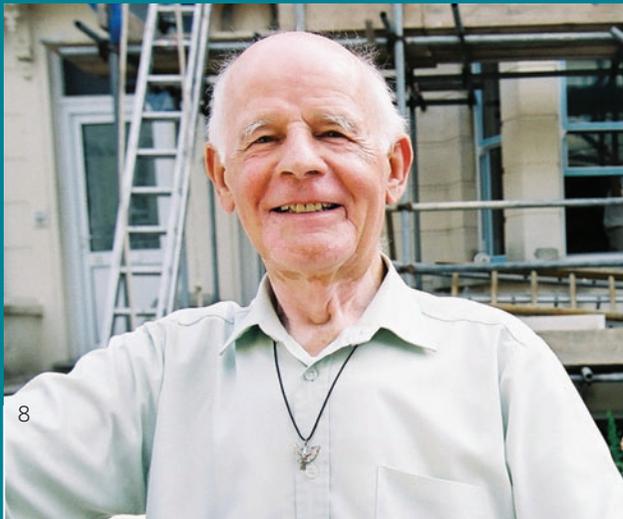
In a new departure for 2010, both conference days featured breakout sessions which were a mix of master classes and workshops, along with fringe sessions - 30 minute 'tasters' on subjects such as social marketing, the future of housing support and collective procurement of aids and adaptations. These sessions allowed delegates to participate in open discussions with colleagues and gain insight into practical solutions. Engaging with the health agenda and exploring innovative practice were hot favourites at the event.



# Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT)

Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT) is a charity founded and administered by Foundations staff but owned and managed by independent Trustees. The Chair of the Trust is Baroness Kay Andrews OBE, former DCLG Minister and now Chair of English Heritage. FILT operates a general hardship fund (providing small grants for urgent small repairs, aids, adaptations and security measures) and a separate hardship fund covering heating and insulation, funded by npower Health through Warmth. Working with home improvement agencies (HIAs) throughout England, FILT provides support to people in need.

Grants are targeted at the clients of home improvement agencies requiring urgent financial support when no other funding is available or in some cases cannot be accessed within the necessary time frame.



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FILT has an impressive record of delivering hardship grants.

- we have received over 620 applications for support
- we have given out £270,000 in grants – an average of £510 per grant
- we have worked with over 20 donors and partners to meet their charitable aims

Grants from the FILT hardship fund provide urgent support to people in need to help them make essential home improvements when no other support is available. The very nature of urgent repairs means that vulnerable people are left exposed to harm, injury, illness and discomfort due to lack of appropriate support. Since April 1st 2010, funds totalling £86,536 have been awarded.

On behalf of the FILT Trustees, we wish to thank our funding partners for their continuing support.



## Case study

Mr J, Peterborough

**Grant Total: £881.25**

Mr J lives alone. He has terminal cancer and is undergoing chemotherapy treatment. His illness was compounded because his heating worked only intermittently and he didn't have access to regular heat or hot water. With no savings and a weekly income of only £119 from Disability Living Allowance, Mr J was unable to afford the repairs himself. This problem was really affecting him because of his illness – especially through the winter months. Mr J's occupational therapist contacted his local home improvement agency, Peterborough Care and Repair, which assessed the repairs that needed to be carried out. As no financial help was available anywhere, the caseworker applied to the hardship fund on behalf of Mr J. He received a cheque for £881.25 within two weeks and the repairs were carried out with minimum inconvenience to Mr J.

Case worker Julie Lewis said:

“The actual process of applying for a hardship grant was really quick and easy and I was absolutely delighted with how quickly the application was turned around. The client was in real need of support because it was almost constantly cold, which was really a problem considering his illness. The service really is brilliant.”

# Looking forward

Looking forward to 2011/12 the aims of Foundations will be:

## Sustaining the HIA sector

Many home improvement agencies face a funding precipice over the next few years, as funding for public services is substantially reduced in order to address the fiscal deficit. In order to survive, agencies will have to continue developing and make fundamental changes to their funding structures and also develop self-sustaining business models, as new funding streams emerge. Foundations will provide a leadership role in the sector's revolution into a more energised, less grant dependent sector.

## Building the HIA sector

The importance of partnership working for the HIA sector is a key strand to their future development and for Foundations also, partnerships with other agencies will help to build a stronger and more diverse sector. Agencies will need support to initiate and develop new conversations with new partners they may not have engaged hitherto.

## Increasing the range of services offered by HIAs

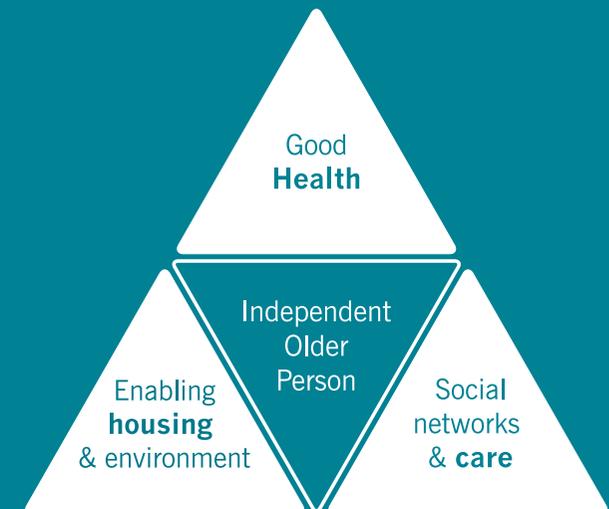
Commissioners may increasingly look to cluster home-based support services for personal budget holders. The breadth of HIA offer will need to continue to morph to reflect this shift and the challenge represented by renewed focus on personalisation.

## Raising awareness of what the HIA sector achieves

Creating and executing opportunities for the HIA sector to showcase their activities and raise their profile with relevant stakeholders.

# The headlines and issues

- Falls alone cost the NHS £1.7bn a year
- In the winter period (December to March) of 2009/10 there were an estimated 25,400 more deaths in England and Wales, compared with the average for the non-winter period
- 51% go into care home after hospitalisation because a return to home is not practical
- Number of older disabled people to double from 2.3m to 4.6m by 2041
- Older people are twice as likely to be in fuel poverty



The triangle of independence



# Rising to the opportunities

Foundations will be working throughout 2011/12 to rise to the challenges that the sector is presenting.

## Housing

Revenue budgets for social care and housing-related support are under ever-increasing pressure. Care and support needs are increasing as the population ages, and expectations are rising as people rightly demand more from their housing and care. Home improvement agencies are well placed to deliver these services to the expanding older population through delivery to a mix of able-to-pay clients and those supported by public funding.

Social enterprise models are taking shape across the country and Foundations will be cascading best practice throughout 2011/12 with the assistance of the regional managers. There are business opportunities that an ageing population brings. There are increasing examples of how care, support and other practical services such as handy person or 'help at home' services can be developed and offered to all older people in all types of tenure and Foundations will explore these over the coming year.

## Energy

At the heart of the Government's proposals is the "Green Deal plan", a financing mechanism which allows consumers to pay back the costs of energy efficiency improvements through their energy bills.

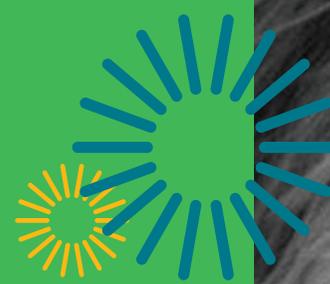
Alongside the Green Deal, the new Energy Company Obligation (ECO) will focus energy companies on improving the ability of the vulnerable and those on lower incomes to heat their homes affordably, and on improving solid wall properties, which have not benefitted much from previous schemes.

Foundations is positioned to help develop partnerships between HIAs and energy companies to meet existing and future obligations to the hard-to-reach and vulnerable members of our communities, and to make the case for significant HIA involvement in delivery of the Green Deal.

## Health and social care

The links between poor health and poor housing are well known. Existing research outlines the potential savings of adaptations and other housing-related measures when compared to potential health and care costs at a later date. There is currently a lack of evidence into the direct health benefits of home improvement agency (HIA) services, and reviews of existing research into the effects of housing interventions on health have concluded that there is a need for further studies.

Foundations will be working on building this evidence base throughout 2011/12, bringing together the disparate evidence and highlighting the positive impact on health of HIA interventions. A number of HIAs have direct links with health and social care commissioners. Foundations will emphasise and communicate the effectiveness of these partnerships through collating evidence of best practice in the sector.



## Information and advice

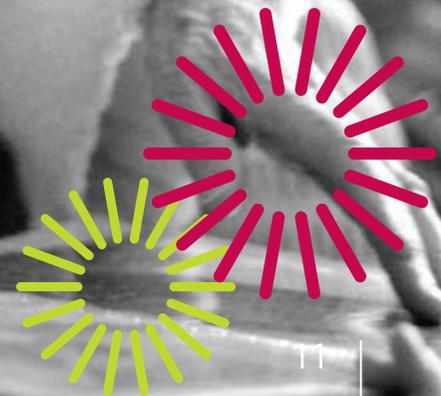
Information and advice is likely to play an increasingly large part in the future as the pressure increases to allocate housing and resources most effectively. Personalisation will also drive a need for greater advocacy and brokerage to assist individuals to manage budgets and decisions relating to their future housing, health and care needs.

Foundations will scope opportunities for agencies to play an enhanced role in the information and advice economy, to develop alternative models for engaging with clients, and better links with local partners and national advice providers such as First Stop. Key to this work will be a thorough examination of the role of the HIA caseworker, analysing how the changing environment has affected the core skills, knowledge and abilities needed to deliver this vital component of an HIA service.

## Emerging priorities

Looking ahead we can see several emerging priorities which will provide focus for activity over the coming year:

- public health and wellbeing boards being increasingly important for stakeholder involvement
- funding, and in particular, creating opportunities to introduce new funding to the sector, such as handyperson services aimed at self-funders
- a sustained focus on energy efficiency, including keeping older and vulnerable people safe in warm homes
- efficiency in service delivery without compromising on the range of services offered by an HIA
- caseworker skills given the growing need for information, advice and guidance on options and funding opportunities (for clients), and
- generating evidence of the impact of HIA services



# Contact



**Making Homes Warm, Safe & Secure**



HANDYPERSON  
MAJOR ADAPTATIONS  
SUPPORT FOR CHOICE  
CONNECTING WITH HEALTH  
FUNDING FOR REPAIRS & ADAPTATIONS



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