



Dementia Grants Pilot

Supported by Taylor Wimpey

**Taylor
Wimpey**



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Background

Dementia is not a natural part of ageing. It affects 1 in 14 of people over 65 and 1 in 6 over 80. The most common form of dementia is Alzheimer's disease. As dementia affects a person's mental abilities maintaining their independence becomes a problem. Many people with dementia may also have other illnesses or disabilities to contend with too.

Home Improvement Agencies (HIA) are ideally placed to help people with dementia improve their environment and maintain their independence, not just because of the assessments, repairs and adaptations they carry out, but because of their wider experience and holistic approach they can also refer on to other agencies as and when necessary and identify other potential home improvements that the person with dementia, or the household in which they live, may be eligible for.

Small improvements in a home that may sound commonplace can have a disproportionate health benefit if someone is suffering from dementia. For example, introducing colour contrasts alone to help things stand out can have a tremendous positive effect as can changing the lighting.

These improvements, large or small, in many cases would not happen if a HIA was not involved as research has shown that many old people are reluctant to engage contractors as they are scared being taken advantage of in some way. Research in Preston suggests 77% of people would not have had the work done without the involvement of the local HIA. Having an HIA involved removes that fear and replaces it with trust and security.

The benefits of these improvements are impossible to overstate. On the personal level research suggests that the reduction in falls is reduced by over a third and almost 100% of people say they are less worried and have improved well-being as a result of the work undertaken. Though this is enough in itself, the benefit to wider society is felt in reduced hospital admissions and earlier discharge when someone is in hospital. Cost benefit analysis of a Handyman service published in July 2018 suggests that the savings accrued by health and social services alone due to the reduction in falls is £4.28 for every £1 invested.

The numbers of people with dementia is expected to double over the next 30 years according to Department of Health figures. Foundations and Foundations Independent Living Fund (FILT) are dedicated to helping people remain in their own homes so it is no surprise that supporting people with dementia is a key part of their housing strategy. As part of this strategic drive FILT with support from Taylor Wimpey decided to run a project specifically dedicated to helping people with dementia and £10,000 was allocated to the project.

FILT were keen to use the funding innovatively, flexibly and by empowering people by allocating the funding to local organisations in their own community. In February 2018 they contacted HIAs across the country asking for expressions of interest to spend up to £2,500 on dementia related home improvement interventions. Within the two-week deadline 20 applications were received. Four months later over 250 interventions had taken place with over 200 people benefitting.

For such a small project FILT were able to choose four different Home Improvement Agencies representing the country in different ways. Geographically from north to south and east to west, but also in terms of very different communities with a mix of rural and urban, and in the Isle of Wight, Preston and parts of Lincolnshire, areas including some of the most deprived communities in the country. The HIAs chosen were:

- WE Care and Repair Limited (Bath, North East Somerset, North Somerset, Bristol and South Gloucestershire)
- Age UK Isle of Wight
- Lincolnshire Home Independence Agency
- Preston Care and Repair

Four different agencies and four different approaches, though all with the same ultimate goal to enhance the quality of life for people living with dementia by:

- Reducing the risk of falls in the home
- Reducing the risk of hospital admission
- Enabling safer independent living
- Improving well being

Across the country social care and support is rationed by eligibility criteria and levels of service can be dependent upon which area you live. The funding from Taylor Wimpey was instrumental in removing these barriers as it enabled local organisations to support people immediately after they had been assessed, as they did not have to then re-submit people for assessment by local statutory services or apply for grants in the hope that they would be successful.

Summary of project achievements

“A safe pair of hands”

WE Care and Repair opted for larger scale interventions. They used the funds available to radically change four traditional bathrooms to dementia friendly wet rooms. For example, Mr and Mrs W were struggling with a bathroom that did not meet their needs, Mr W who has Alzheimer’s disease was no longer capable of showering himself or able to get to the bathroom on his own in the night.

The funding from Taylor Wimpey and FILT went towards the cost of red grab rails, red toilet seat, a red bathroom door and the installation/conversion costs. Colour contrast are very important in helping people with dementia know where things are. Mrs W can now assist Mr W in the shower without getting soaked herself, and Mr W is now able to get to the toilet himself during the night enabling him to be more independent and Mrs W to get a better night’s sleep.



Mrs W described the whole process in glowing terms describing WE Care and Repair “... professional, expert and helpful, and a safe pair of hands”.

“This is an excellent service! Very pleased to know I can contact you to help me and my husband remain in our own home”

Preston Care & Repair took a different approach. There are over 4,000 people with dementia in the part of Lancashire that Preston Care and Repair work and they already had a Dementia Support Service. They decided to use the funding on minor adaptations and aids, small changes with a big impact.

Normally after the completion of an assessment the client, depending upon need etc, has the option to pay privately for the work or to contact the council for an Occupational Therapy Assessment. The grant from Taylor Wimpey enabled Preston Care & Repair to remove barriers of cost and time. They were able to provide and install 177 adaptations or aids, helping improve the lives of almost 150 people, and all the work was completed within two weeks of the person being assessed. Perhaps not surprisingly 100% of clients thought that the work had enhanced the quality of life of the person living with dementia.

The fact that this work was undertaken by a Home Improvement Agency is important, as they were able to take a holistic approach to assessment.

For example, Mr and Mrs Y are a couple in their mid-eighties both have mobility issue and Mr Y has dementia. Following their Healthy Home Assessment, a grab rail was fitted and installed as was a toilet frame to help Mrs Y who has mobility problems. In addition, the back door was repaired making the home safer and warmer, a successful request to the council for assisted bin collection was submitted as Mr and Mrs Y were having great difficulty putting the bin out and collecting it again and another referral made for a benefit check. Only a repair service that was also a Home Improvement Agency would have the skills, knowledge and experience to do this.

“A great improvement to my mother’s wellbeing”

Lincolnshire Home Independence Agency decided to use the funds to build partnerships for the future by helping develop another local organisation (Alzheimer’s Society, Lincolnshire) by providing them with the provision of equipment and adaptations that they described “as routine”, but are life enhancing nonetheless. By working with another local charity Lincolnshire Home Independence Agency was able to share their expertise and develop future working relationships for future joint projects, ensuring the funding has a lasting legacy impact.

In Lincolnshire 48 interventions (41 pieces of equipment, 7 minor adaptations) supported 36 clients across the county. As an HIA additional support was also provided by working with and referring on to other agencies, such as support groups, district nurses and adult care services.

There was a focus on the importance of time and memory. Knowing whether it is night or day so you can get up, or time to take your medication is important and something most of us take for granted, but is a serious problem for people with dementia who can get easily confused about the time of day. Approximately a third of the equipment bought went to promote independence by providing special clocks that help people know whether to get up or not or remind them to take their medication. Mrs V said the purchase of a digital clock enabling her mother to take her own medication has made “a great improvement to my mother’s wellbeing”.



“Simple things that we take for granted like going to the bathroom alone, without my help, gives him back his independence”

Age UK in the Isle of Wight also focussed on equipment that can transform lives by using the additional funding to buy and install toilet seats, grab rails, signs and lighting. So far 44



people have had assessments and as a result enhancement made to their home environment by the installation of over 200 pieces of equipment, though this is set to increase when the remaining stock is used up.

What made this work different from the normal work carried out in the Isle of Wight is the piloting of new dementia specific aids which had not previously been available locally and reaching out to previously unknown clients.

A series of presentations was given across the island to all the Community Memory Groups and other cognitive stimulation therapy groups to make people aware of equipment available that can assist them with their symptoms and help them manage their lives better

Though most of the funding was spent on new equipment a small amount was used to generate new referrals by advertising in different places. By working closely with a local respite centre they were able to reach new clients and make them aware of what is available.

What may seem relatively small changes, make a big difference. As put by Mrs W, who lives with her husband who has dementia “Having access to free equipment to help make our home dementia friendly has made my husband’s life, and by extension mine, so much better. Simple things that we take for granted like going to the bathroom alone, without my help, gives him back his independence”.

The Bigger Picture

FILT and the HIA's they work with have demonstrated a clear demand for resources to support people with dementia with twenty applications received in a two-week period. The project was turned around very quickly with all the funding being spent on front line service provision as FILT and the HIAs absorbed all management costs.

Even with the relatively small amount of money that each local HIA received, a big impact was made with over 200 people benefitting because as local organisations they are closer to the people they serve, know what they need, and with the additional resources available were able to remove many of the barriers that cause delay, frustration and poor service.

HIAs are uniquely positioned to add value to any home improvement project because of their holistic approach and the range of knowledge and skills that they possess and the learning culture that they share with each other through the offices of FILT.

By working successfully with companies like Taylor Wimpey that have a strong sense of community, a commitment to quality and a robust sustainability strategy FILT can use their unique position to lever in funds and advise how it can be spent, but they can also help influence future design and investment decisions for sustainable housing.

Until and unless there is a medical breakthrough in the treatment/prevention of dementia, given the current age profile of the country the demand for this type of project is only going to increase in the foreseeable future.



Jacqueline and George

A personal story produced with the kind permission

Nothing illustrates the benefits of home improvements and adaptations than the story of Jacqueline and George.

George was referred to Lincolnshire Home Independence Agency (LHIA) by the Alzheimer's Society. His wife, Jacqueline explains: 'When I first got in contact with LHIA's caseworker, Alison, I was at a very low ebb. I wasn't very mobile, I was in pain, waiting for a knee replacement and finding it difficult to care for George, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's five years ago. I needed someone to talk to and we needed help with practical things.'



Alison visited the couple at home to assess their living environment and see what could be done to make keep them as safe, warm and secure as possible at home. First, she arranged the installation of a banister to make it easier for Jacqueline and George to negotiate the steps up to their front door and a ramp outside the threshold, as it had posed a tripping hazard.

Alison also secured small items of equipment to help people with limited dexterity and mobility accomplish everyday chores, including a button extender, to help George get dressed.

The banister, ramp and equipment were funded through the Taylor Wimpey Dementia Initiative, which LHIA delivered in conjunction with the Lincolnshire branch of the Alzheimer's Society and Foundations Independent Living Trust.

Alison arranged for Jacqueline and George to be included on the Priority Services Register which enables them to access extra support in the event of a power cut. The couple also received a crisis pack including a torch, flask and items to help keep them warm, should a power cut take place. LHIA provides customers with this support on behalf of Nottingham Energy Partnership as part of the East Midlands Affordable Warmth Campaign.

Alison notified the Fire Liaison Officer that, given George's illness and Jacqueline's reduced mobility, the household would need more help put in place in the event of a fire, and organized a Home Safety check with the Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service. An extra smoke alarm was fitted as a result.

A benefits check was also undertaken to ensure that Jacqueline and George were accessing all the financial support to which they were entitled.

Alison is going to arrange extra lighting in the bathroom and is taking advice from their mobile home manufacturer regarding the fixing of extension leads to the wall so that neither Jacqueline nor George has to bend down behind furniture to reach sockets.

'Alison has been wonderful', says Jacqueline. 'I didn't know such people existed to help us.'



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