

BRIEFING FOR DECISION	TO:	Anne Marie Lubanski and Councillor David Roche
	DATE:	15 th December 2020
	LEAD OFFICER (Full name, title and Directorate)	Karen Smith Strategic Commissioning Manager Adults (Joint Commissioning RMBC/CCG) Adult Care, Housing and Public Health
	TITLE:	Home Improvement Agency Contract – Needs, Advice, Support and Handyperson Service - Yorkshire Housing

Background

- The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) is a jointly commissioned service that both the Council and Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group (RCCG) contribute via a pooled budget arrangement under a Section 75 agreement covering the Better Care Fund (BCF) for 2019/20

The service was tendered at a fixed contractual value of £75,000 per annum in 2016/17 for a 2 period of two years. A contract variation was issued to Yorkshire Housing and the service was extended for a further one year from 1st October 2018 until 30th September 2019. A further exemption was granted and a new contract was issued to Yorkshire Housing from 1st October 2019 until 30th September 2020, with new revised eligibility criteria to reduce activity levels as the current provider was subsidising the service by around £22,000 per annum

The intention was to carry out a customer consultation exercise in March 2020 to mitigate the risks of decommissioning the service, to move towards a customer funded model of provision and to identify opportunities to signpost customers to other services. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic announced on 11th March 2020 and following advice from Legal Services, it was agreed that consultation with customers would need to be delayed as attention needed to focus on supporting emergency/urgent needs and that this could potentially affect the Council's reputation in supporting vulnerable customers through this difficult and challenging time. Legal Services also recommended that this should be carried out when the peak of the pandemic was over (first wave) and normal working arrangements have resumed with the current provider. Therefore, an exemption was granted for a further 12 months and a new contract was issued to Yorkshire Housing from 1st October 2020 until 30th September, 2021. This enabled the service to continue to support vulnerable customers post Covid-19 (first wave) and to carry out a consultation over a 4 week period with customers through postal, on-line and telephone surveys. This exercise was carried out from 1st to 30th September 2020, although some customer surveys have been received up to the end of October 2020 and have been included in the evaluation.

The current contract value for 2020/2021 (Q3-Q4) and 2021/22 (Q1-Q2) is £75,000 per annum. RCCG provides £60,000 (80%) of the funding which comes from the former Health and Social Care Support Grant, which is part of the core BCF allocation, and (20%) £15,000 is provided from the Council's revenue budget. The HIA service is currently delivered under a block contract agreement with Yorkshire Housing.

The service is commissioned by the Council to support vulnerable people living in poor or unsuitable housing within the borough, and provides a point of contact to individual 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.

This service is predominantly provided to customers aged 65 years and over or customers who have a disability/life-long limiting illness whom are unable to carry out the work themselves and have no access to any other sources of assistance, although it is available to individuals over the age of 16 years. The main aim of the service is to prevent homelessness, social exclusion, preventing falls and admissions to hospital.

Customer Engagement Survey analysis

A customer engagement exercise was carried out from 1st to 30th September 2020 with a total of 581 customers who had been in receipt of the Needs Advice, Support and Handyperson Service during the 12 month period of 1st August, 2019 until 30th July, 2020.

A total of 158 surveys were completed consisting of 138 postal, 15 on-line and 5 telephone which shows that this achieved a 27% response rate. The full evaluation report is attached as Appendix 1.

The key findings from the consultation exercise are as follows:

- 29% of customers had received advice and support from the Needs, Advice and Support Service. The main reasons were around advice around safety and security (40%) and falls prevention (76%).
- 89% of customers had received a Handyperson visit, the main reasons were 30% to change a lightbulb, 26% for hand/grab/stair-rails, 24% to hang curtains/blinds/put up rails and 22% for door alarm/locks/chains/bolts.
- 18% of customers reported that the handyperson carried out additional work, in addition to their original request. This included smoke alarm testing, carbon monoxide alarm, hang pictures/curtains/blinds, hand/stair/grab rails, change lightbulbs, assembling flat pack furniture and toilet frame/seat.
- 52% of customers confirmed that they had to financially contribute towards the cost of materials provided by the Handyperson service.
- 42% of customers reported that they contributed up to £10, 18% between £11 to £20, 17% from £21 to £30 and 23% up to £31 and over.
- 96% of customers confirmed that the time from referral to receiving a Handyperson visit was either very reasonable or very unreasonable and 3% as unreasonable and very unreasonable.
- 24% were referred from Customer Contact Team, 13% from Housing Contact Centre, 18% made a self-referral, with the remaining from independent sector and voluntary organisations.
- 59% had received the service on 1 or 2 occasions in the last 12 months and 25% received this on 3 to 10 occasions. This is despite the contract specifically stipulating that customers can only access the handyperson service to a maximum of two handyperson visits per annum unless there are extenuating circumstances.
- 12% of customers confirmed that family, friends or neighbours could have carried out some of the work for them.
- 67% confirmed that if the handyperson service were no longer available free of charge that they would be willing to financially contribute to this

- 34% felt that £11 to £20 was a reasonable amount to contribute to the handyperson service, 27% would pay up to £10 and 9% would be willing to contribute £21 and over. 30% of customers did not respond to this question.
- 70% of customers confirmed they live alone.
- 71% of customers are aged 65 years and over, with the remaining customers aged between 25-64 years of age.
- 69% were female, 27% male and 4% preferred not to confirm their gender.
- 91% were White British, 6% prefer not to say and 3% from White Irish, Indian or Black African ethnicity.
- 28% of customers reported that they did not have a disability which suggests that they accessed the service solely as being 65 years and over.
- Customers reported that they had more than one disability/health condition. This includes 70% had a physical disability, 53% had a long-standing health condition, 17% mental health condition, 15% sensory impairment, 13% learning disability,
- 71% from a Christian background, 10% had no religious beliefs, 1% from agnostic. And 17% preferred not to say or said "other".

Performance Data 2020/21 (Quarters 1 to 2)

Yorkshire Housing have also provided activity data during the Covid-19 pandemic (Appendix 2) which shows that during Quarters 1 and 2 of 2020/21:

- A total of 262 customers received a service from Yorkshire Housing in the 6 months period, which shows that it is predicted that around 524 customers will receive a service within the contracted 12 months period.
- 255 customers received a Handyperson visit and received 563 interventions/support.
- 7 customers have received advice and support
- 37% of handyperson interventions were for safety, 43% for security, 13% for general repairs, 6% for practical advice and 1% for plumbing.
- 97% of work was carried out within a timeframe of 1 hour.
- 51 customers received a bathing assessment.
- 64% of customers were aged 65 and over, 3% aged 14 to 25 years and 33% aged between 26 years and 64 years.
- 40% lived in Council owned accommodation, 45% in privately owned accommodation, 1% in shared ownership, 6% in Housing Association accommodation, 7% privately rented and 1% with family and friends
- 76% were female and 24% were male customers.
- 98% were white British and 2% from Asian/Asian-British (Pakistani) origin.
- 63% had chronic ill health, 17% with a physical disability and 16% did not have a primary health condition.

The performance data shows that activity of both services has significantly reduced since the review of the service completed which showed that 1,300 customers were accessing both services in 2019/20 and revised eligibility criteria imposed in 2020/21 reduced contracted activity levels to 800 customers.. This has now reduced further due to Covid-19 to around 524 customers per annum.

Duplicated Activity with Other Services

There still remains some duplicated activity that other services could provide as follows:

- Provision of grab rails which could be supplied and fitted by housing contractors and can be accessed through the Council's First Contact Team and Housing Contact Centre.

- Toilet frames and toilet seats are prescribed by the Community Occupational Therapy service and supplied by REWS (Medequip). The Community OT team could provide advice and guidance (and carry out an assessment where appropriate) to purchase bathing equipment, but this may increase their workload by around 100 customers per year. It is anticipated some of these could be assessed and advised by telephone rather than needing a face to face visit.
- Medequip could “showcase” some of their equipment in their local store for customers to purchase their own equipment which could also include bathing equipment, but this needs time to develop and implement.
- Referrals for installation and testing of smoke alarms could be directed to South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, as part of a home safety check.
- Age UK Rotherham’s Information and Advice Service could offer advice and support for people to maximise income through welfare benefits, getting support to live independently and to access health and social care that they need.
- Yorkshire Housing’s Handytec Service provides the same type of service but is available to customers to provide all handyperson duties at a charge of £29.99 per hour (customer funded model of provision)

Yorkshire and Humber

Benchmarking data has also revealed that the majority of neighbouring areas who have commissioned handyperson type services, currently charge customers a fee, ranging from £10 to £60 per hour and some areas the customer also pays towards the cost of materials. Rotherham appears to be the only area that offers handyperson type services free of charge to the customer in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

Key Issues

2. The contract currently funds for Yorkshire Housing staff as follows:

Senior HIA Manager*	1.5 hours per week
HIA Manager*	3.5 hours per week
Team Leader*	18 hours a week
Handyperson*	18 hours per week
Senior Admin/Needs Advice and Support	16 hours per week
Needs, Advice and Support Worker	3.5 hours per week

*The above members of staff also are paid also from the Barnsley contract, which ensures cost effectiveness of both services. Contributions to these posts are split 50:50 and costs associated with overheads such as vans are included. These staff also deliver Handytec Service (self-funded by customers) who work across all 3 areas.

These posts could potentially be redeployed to support Yorkshire Housing’s Handytec Service due to anticipated increase in referrals, once the current service which is free of charge to the customer has been decommissioned.

There is a potential to affect the waiting times for the Community Occupational Therapy (COT) Service as simple requests for bathing and toileting will be directed to this service if this contract is decommissioned. This is potentially approximately 100 additional contacts to COT. This will need to be monitored, but this is likely to cause minimal impact to the service.

There may also be a potential impact on Council residents as the current in-house system is supported by Yorkshire Housing regarding low level repairs. Therefore, losing this offer may have an impact on the current arrangements with in-house services. In Q1-Q2 of 2020/21, there have been 119 Council tenants who have accessed the handyperson service. Some of the referrals from Council tenants are referred on to Housing Repairs where specialist work is

	<p>required e.g. electrical work. There would also be minimal impact to young people aged 14 to 25 years as only 5 referrals have been received in a 6 month period.</p> <p>Details of Other Options that Could be Considered:</p> <p>Rotherham could continue to commission the current Needs, Advice, Support and Handyperson services to a limited number of older people and people with disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria. Tender documentation would need to be completed by February 2021.</p> <p>Not recommended: The services are now only providing a service to around 500 customers per year .The needs of 100 customers would be better met by the Community Occupational Therapy Service as a high number of these are already re-referred to the service for ongoing support e.g. adaptations.</p> <p>Other Local Authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region have decommissioned these types of services in their local areas and moved towards a customer funded model of provision where customers pay towards the supply, fitting and cost of materials.</p>
<p>Key Actions and Relevant Timelines</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Equality Analysis Form and send to the Council’s Equality Team for approval. • 6 months written notice to terminate contract to be served to Yorkshire Housing on 31st March 2021. • Yorkshire Housing to consult with employees during a 3-month period from 1st July until 30th September 2021.
<p>Recommendations</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Strategic Director, Adult Care, Housing and Public Health and Cabinet Member approves the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to serve 6 months’ written notice to terminate the contract on 31st March 2021. • Decommissioning of the service by 30th September 2021, with a view to moving towards a customer funded model of provision by 1st October 2021. • Plan for future referrals to the service to be signposted to other appropriate services e.g. the Yorkshire Housing’s Handytec Service, Community Occupational Therapy service and Housing Contact Centre