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# ANNUAL REPORT 2005/6

Care and Repair (West Leicestershire) Ltd  
is registered as an Industrial and Provident  
Society with charitable status. No. 24755R  
Mo Murray: Director/Secretary



# *Care & Repair (West Leicestershire) Ltd*

West Leicestershire Care and Repair is the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) serving North West Leicestershire and Hinckley and Bosworth.

Care and Repair helps older and other vulnerable people to live in safe, warm, secure, well maintained and adapted homes.

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## CARE AND REPAIR (WEST LEICESTERSHIRE) LIMITED

Chairperson Mr Derek Howe

### Committee

**Mr Bruce Birkett - North West Leicestershire DC**

Mrs Ruth Camamile (Vice Chair)

Mrs Carole Charlesworth

Mrs Patricia A Elderfield (Treasurer)

**Mr John Hollis**

Mrs Margaret Hopewell

Mr Derek J S Lambourne

**Mrs Marlene Pearson - East Midlands Housing**

Dr Ken Waterlow

### Co-opted Members

Cllr A John Geary - North West Leicestershire DC

Cllr David W Thorpe - Hinckley & Bosworth BC

Miss Judith O'Connor - Hinckley & Bosworth BC (to May 2005)

Ms Sharon Stacey - Hinckley & Bosworth BC (from November 2005)

### Ex Officio

Ms Ranjana Kachhela - Leicestershire C.C. (Social Services)

### Staff

Mo Murray

Secretary/Director

Joan Bailey

Clerical Assistant

Ian Barker

Technical Adviser - Plumbing and Heating

Suzanna Bresnihan

Housing Adviser

Stewart Cawson

Technical Adviser

Heather Rainer

Administrator

Margaret Liddington

Housing Adviser

Julie Smith

Housing Adviser

Frances Ward

Administrative Assistant

### Funders

North West Leicestershire DC

Hinckley & Bosworth BC

Leicestershire Supporting People/ODPM

Leicestershire County Council

### Auditors

Rogers Spencer and Co

### Bankers

Co-operative Bank plc

## **Introduction**

Care and Repair has been providing an effective Home Improvement Agency service for 20 years. We have made a real difference to the homes and lives of many people. The staff team continues to provide wide-ranging advice and practical assistance to enquirers to enable our clients to live in safe, warm, secure, well maintained and adapted homes. A few of our original clients are still using our services. However we are always attracting new people and this year some 45%, (437) of our 983 enquiries were from new users of the service. During the year some 450 jobs were completed. With some 80% of older people living in homes that they own, and the population ageing, there will continue to be an increasing need for our services.

## **Staffing**

For the third year running, no staff member has left. This stability benefits all involved - the staff themselves, the organisation, our partners and, most importantly, our clients. However we must continue to develop and update staff knowledge and expertise. Following annual staff reviews we ran a house construction and common disrepair course for housing advisers, and desktop publishing training with the aid of matched funding from the Learning and Skills Council. There was also training on falls awareness.

## **Across the Districts.**

We have worked closely with the private sector housing teams in both North West Leicestershire District Council and Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council to help them deliver their housing strategies. Government housing legislation in the Regulatory Reform Order brought new types of home improvement assistance, recommending loans rather than grants. Both our Districts have introduced interest free loans to replace some housing grants. Both Districts also underwent radical restructuring and staff changes that affected the private sector housing teams and therefore us. The main links in both Districts left, and we have adapted to new colleagues. We were particularly sorry to lose Judith O'Connor, the Hinckley and Bosworth senior grants officer and our committee member and link officer for 17 years

During the year preparations were in hand for the the introduction of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) from April 2006. This will become the statutory minimum standard for housing conditions and

replace the fitness standard as an element of the Decent Homes standard. The government target is to increase the percentage of vulnerable households who live in decent homes in the private sector to 70% by 2010. This is a tremendous task as, despite some additional resources, the investment in the private sector has reduced over recent years.

Providing welfare benefits service to our clients continues to make an appreciable difference to their lives, reducing worry for those trying to survive on minimal incomes. During the year 67 clients successfully gained additional benefits, particularly Attendance Allowance, Council tax benefit and Pension credit, which totalled £134,500 - an average of £2,000 each.

### **North West Leicestershire**

We have continued to carry out small repairs grants for people over 60 years old, and completed 59 jobs totalling £91,700. We continued to push to take a more active role in delivering the Council's private sector housing strategy, and by the end of the year were involved in three small renovation loans for clients. We are in discussion with their new team and hope that our track record will encourage them to involve us further.

Funding from the Private Sector housing budget enabled us to run a small successful pilot project in the homes of older vulnerable homeowners. This involved installing radiator panels, which reflect heat from the radiator back into the room rather than through the external wall. We hope that additional funding will enable us to offer this service to other groups.

### **Hinckley and Bosworth**

The reduction in the budget for home improvement grants resulted in a very difficult year. The budget for 2005/6 for minor works was £90,000, compared to £257,000 in 2004/5. In order to manage this, the criteria for eligible works and financial eligibility were tightened significantly. In the end only £32,000 of the allocation was spent. As much of the work to enable people to remain in their own homes was essential but ineligible for grant, we worked hard to raise £20,000 in charitable aid; the Royal British Legion was particularly supportive. In the past, clients who were having grant work done often put some of their own money towards additional works, but the lack of grants has also reduced this private work.

Our role in delivering the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme continued. The allocated £175k was spent, and a further £50k allocated and spent. This enabled 33 clients and their families and carers to receive help. The coordination and delivery of the programme is often complex

and always time consuming. It relies on partners working together - OTs, Adult Social Care colleagues, grants officers, clients and their families, and contractors. The outcome of a government review of DFGs, due early in 2006, is still awaited. Hopefully this will tackle such issues as over-demand and delays.

### **Additional services**

Our Handyperson service carried out 223 small essential jobs for our clients. These ranged from cleaning out gutters to replacing tap washers. The government has finally acknowledged the role that handyperson services can play in supporting older people in the community and is making handyperson services eligible for Supporting People grant. Unfortunately this is a distant dream in Leicestershire due to Supporting People's funding deficit.

### **Business planning and a quality service**

The first year of our three-year business plan included realistic but ambitious targets for the year. It is a credit to the staff team that most of these were achieved, many forming part of this report. One objective that was not achieved was to increase the level of fee based services in order to earn more income to continue the current level of core services. Although these services were promoted and interest generated, we found that we had insufficient technical resources to undertake much of this work within a reasonable time scale.

### **Partnership projects**

The Leicestershire Safe at Home Partnership continued, together with Help the Aged, to make secure the homes of over 600 older people in Charnwood, North West Leicestershire and Hinckley and Bosworth. In addition a small pilot project was undertaken in Blaby. Care and Repair continues as the main partner providing the administrative support and office base as well as chairing and leading the project. Funding for the project was only secure until the summer of 2006. There was increasing demand to provide a similar service for younger people. A feasibility study was commissioned funded by a grant from "Enterprise for Inclusion" and "Awards for All". The report confirmed the demand for a service and proposed several ways forward, including employing an additional handyperson and a van. Members met and unanimously asked Care and Repair to take a wider role and responsibility. With our current successful scheme we use local contractors to carry out handyperson work. We have offered to continue in this way in order to lessen financial risk as there is

not yet guaranteed work to warrant purchasing a van and employing an additional staff member.

We continue as the loan manager for two schemes providing interest only loans for energy efficiency measures, Energyvision and Leicester Loans. These schemes are proving very successful and provide a blue print for future schemes. By recycling the loan funds the original £94,660 from the Energy Savings Trust in 2001 has provided 137 loans totalling £230,000. In the same way, over the three years the Leicester Loans scheme has used the initial funding of £41,000 to provide 41 loans totalling £81,785.

In June the Leicestershire Home Safety Action group ran a county wide exhibition and event "Safe as Houses". As members of this group we collated a "Directory of Handyperson Services in Leicestershire". Research identified ten schemes and highlighted the gaps in such services, especially for younger people.

The Disabled Persons Housing Service (DPHS), established by Care and Repair in 1998 with lottery funding and becoming independent in April 2002, has closed. This was an innovative project but was unable to obtain sustainable funding. The core work transferred in house to East Midlands Housing Association and the remaining assets were transferred to us to assist our work with people with disabilities. Nationally few DPHSs have developed, much of the work now being included in the work of HIAs.

### **Signposting services**

We work closely with other organisations in order to provide the best service we can for our clients. This includes referrals to Age Concern, the Pensions Service, Social Services/Adult Social Care, and the Leicester Energy Advice Centre, to name but a few. The new WarmFront scheme began in June 2005, providing grants to make homes warmer, healthier and more energy efficient. We had high hopes of this project, hoping that it would begin to replace old boilers that were very inefficient and unreliable, rather than only those that had totally broken down. However our hopes were short lived and the delays in installations continue to cause real problems especially for frail and vulnerable clients. We hope that the delivery times will improve and liaise constantly with WarmFront staff to support our clients.

### **Partnerships in progress**

We continue to develop a closer working relationship with our Leicestershire HIA colleagues. Staff have met together to discuss common interests and ways of working. The three managers share responsibility for

attending various meetings and represent each other. This becomes increasingly necessary as the number of partnership projects grows. During the year we have worked closely with both statutory and voluntary sector partners to try and develop new and innovative projects that will benefit our clients. The Department of Health announced a national scheme awarding two year “Telecare grants” to support increased independence for older and disabled people through the use of technology. In Leicestershire there is already the SIGNAL flat, providing low-key interventions, and it is hoped that this project may be developed with additional input from HIAs. Work is also being developed on using assistive technology in the prevention of falls.

During the year the Government introduced a Partnerships for Older Peoples Projects (POPP) process involving competitive bidding. We were involved with Adult Social Services, Health and other partners to develop a project promoting Assistive Technology alongside falls and accident prevention. While this bid was unsuccessful, we hope to do better next time.

Leicestershire is also developing a Local Area Agreement (LAA) for 2006/9 which is aimed at more effective and efficient delivery of services by agencies working together. There are no additional resources, only those brought by efficiency savings. There are a number of elements relating to older people, such as, “To ensure that older people who are living at home have higher standards of housing and support, which enables them to live better quality of lives”

### **Promotion and publicity**

We were determined to take every opportunity to promote our service, and wanted to reach the outlying communities. In Hinckley and Bosworth we also wanted people to know we could still help them, even though there were fewer grants available. We therefore joined with the Council’s Community Help Desks for a month and visited Sheepy Magna, Markfield, Groby and Market Bosworth as well as participating in the September “Older Voices Day”.

We participated in a series of road shows across the rural areas arranged by the North West Leicestershire Council for Voluntary Service and in the “Happy Hearts” event. Staff have given talks to domiciliary care managers, social work teams, and the older mental health services as well as to social groups of older people.

We have sent out regular news releases, resulting in articles in all local papers, many community newsletters, magazines and various websites.

For some time we have been considering updating our logos and image. Through Business in the Community, Pro Help, we received professional help from Hargrave Design Partnership. The new image is on our front cover. Meanwhile Foundations, the national coordinating body, has developed a national identity and common brand with a logo and strap line. We adopted it and hope that this will assist in further developing the profile of HIAs in Leicestershire.

## **Funding**

Core funding continues to be a real problem. The difficulties with the reduction in work and subsequent reduced fee income are detailed in this report. Supporting People is our largest single funder but the grant has not increased since 2001, indeed there has been a small reduction.

## **Monitoring**

Since 1987 we have collected monitoring data for local and national use on a centrally provided database. However in 2005 the Government announced it was no longer requiring this information, which would now be provided to local Supporting People teams, and therefore it discontinued funding for the database. A new web-based Management Information System (MIS) has been introduced, developed by a company set up by Foundations, but owned by all HIAs. There have been teething problems but these appear to be being resolved.

## **Conclusion**

Another challenging and successful year has been completed. However the reduction in the availability of home improvement grants has reduced our ability to earn additional fees. There are difficult decisions to be made by the management committee as we struggle to bring sufficient core funding into the organisation to maintain and develop services in the years ahead.

I would like to thank everyone involved - the staff team, committee, funders, partners, colleagues, contractors and our clients - for making sure that the services we deliver are not only of a high standard but are relevant, practical and continually developing to meet the changing priorities for the service.

Mo Murray

Director. July 2006

## CASE STUDIES

Mr and Mrs A live on a mobile home park, one of several in our area. The couple were referred to us by the CAB as their boiler broke down. We then referred them to Warmfront, the government funded scheme which provides grants in this case to replace the boiler. We were able to offer further help with heating by providing radiator panels that conserve energy by directing heat from the back of the radiator into the room rather than the exterior wall. The home was further made comfortable through the replacement of the flat roof and, paid for with a local authority grant. They were also made safer with a PRIDE alarm, funded by the same grant. Safe at Home arranged a visit by Help the Aged handyvan who carried out a security check and fitted a door chain.

Our home visit enabled us to identify the need for an attendance allowance for Mr A, who has severe breathing problems which had resulted in a long hospitalisation last winter, and carer's benefits for Mrs A and these were successfully applied for.

**Mrs B** is 90years old and has lived in her present isolated cottage for over 60 years. Age Concern contacted us on her behalf as her solid fuel central heating boiler had broken down. We visited and discussed the work with her but she had already contacted a plumber, one we knew well, and as she was paying for it herself and the work was already in hand, we did not get further involved in the replacement of the boiler.

However there was more that we could do for her. As we had done for Mr and Mrs A we fitted radiator panels and arranged a replacement for a rotten window, paid for with a council grant. We referred her to the Red Cross via Social Services for a stair rail and to Safe at Home for security measures and a smoke alarm. Thus through fairly small measures we were able to help a very independent woman to continue to live in reasonable comfort in her own home in her extreme old age. She is supported by her family who also appreciate our involvement.

**Mr C** was referred to us as a result of the concern of a relative who went to the annual Hinckley and Bosworth "Older Voices Day". Mr C had recently retired after many years in a low paid job and his relative did not know how he would manage financially. We made contact and visited to find him very unsure of what financial assistance he was entitled to. He welcomed the visit, which resulted in him getting full council tax benefit and pension

credit. He was also eligible for assistance from Royal British Legion to replace his windows, as no council grants were available.

His house was not well heated and we referred him to WarmFront, but they could only offer him extra storage heaters. However the existing storage heaters were in poor condition. We therefore approached the council, which agreed to a minor works grant for full gas central heating.

He paid privately for further building works from the back-pay due to him for unclaimed benefits.

Understandably Mr C is delighted. He is safe, warm and comfortable in his own home and is less worried about his home and income, and pleased that he can turn to Care and Repair with his problems from now on.

D is 5 years old and lives with her Mother in a two bed-roomed semi. She has difficulty walking and as she is getting older and heavier it is becoming more dangerous for her mother to carry her up and down stairs. A Disabled Facilities Grant was necessary to pay for adaptations. Joint visits were made with the Occupational Therapist and Hinckley and Bosworth District Council grants officer. It was agreed that it was impossible to fit a floor lift as the lounge was so small and so a ground floor bedroom was discussed and agreed. Then the plans were drawn, a few new ideas were discussed, quotes and building regulations sought and a grant application was submitted. Now the work is complete D is much more independent of her mother and they both have a better quality of life and a better relationship.

## NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

Source of Referral	05/06	04/05
Self/other household member Relation/Neighbour	357	423
Occupational Therapist	0	0
Social Services	17	5
Homecare	7	4
LA Environmental Health/Private Sector Housing	21	8
LA Housing Department	0	0
Building Society/Bank	0	0
Health/Primary Care Trust	3	2
Voluntary Organisation	14	10
WarmFront	0	1
Builder/Contractor	7	1
Councillor	0	1
Other (includes Police, press articles)	12	31
<b>Total number of enquiries</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>486</b>

## HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH

Source of Referral	05/06	04/05
Self/other household member Relation/Neighbour	378	272
Occupational Therapist	51	55
Social Services	13	5
Homecare	2	1
LA Environmental Health/Private Sector Housing	47	58
LA Housing Department	1	0
Building Society/Bank	0	0
Health/Primary Care Trust	1	3
Voluntary Organisation	24	16
WarmFront	0	0
Builder/Contractor	0	1
Councillor	0	1
Other (includes Police, press articles)	28	32
<b>Total number of enquiries</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>444</b>

## NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

### SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF FINANCE

	<u>2005/6</u>		<u>2004/05</u>	
	£	No* <sup>1</sup>	£	No* <sup>1</sup>
<b>Renovation Grant System</b>				
Renovation Assistance	-	-	-	-
Repairs Grant	91,702	59	120,771	80
Disabled Facilities (DFG)	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>91,702</b>		<b>120,771</b>	
DSS Community Care Grants	-	-	-	-
Charity/Hardship/Handyperson Insurance	6,945	141	4,165	160
Client Bank /Building Society	63,343	213	73,541	237
			-	-
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>70,288</b>		<b>77,705</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>161,990</b>		<b>198,476</b>	
<b>Total number of jobs completed</b>		<b>249</b>		<b>284</b>

\* 1 Some work is financed from more than one source.

## HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH

### SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF FINANCE

	<u>2005/6</u>		<u>2004/05</u>	
	£	No* <sup>1</sup>	£	No* <sup>1</sup>
<b>Renovation Grant System</b>				
Major Works	129,602	8	158,283	8
Minor Works	32,597	19	257,808	116
Disabled Facilities (DFG)	210,826	33	176,588	24
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>373,025</b>		<b>592,679</b>	
DSS Community Care Grants	-	-	-	-
Charity/Hardship/Handyperson	22,328	101	5,505	69
Insurance	-	-	-	-
Client	33,651	142	49,294	123
Bank/Building Society	-	-	-	-
Social Services (DFG) grant	-	-	1,661	1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>55,979</b>		<b>56,460</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>429,004</b>		<b>649,139</b>	
<b>Total number of jobs completed</b>		<b>192</b>		<b>247</b>

\* 1 Some work is financed from more than one source.