

**Care & Repair
(West Leicestershire)
Ltd**

Annual Report

2006/7

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The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) for 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 & Repair (West Leicestershire) Ltd is registered as an Industrial and Provident Society with charitable status - No. 24755R

CARE AND REPAIR (WEST LEICESTERSHIRE) LIMITED

Chairperson Mr Derek Howe

Committee

Mrs Ruth Camamile (Vice Chair)
Mrs Carole Charlesworth
Mr Gareth Crossley - North West Leicestershire DC
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 (retired August 2006)

Co-opted Members

Cllr A John Geary - North West Leicestershire DC
Ms Sharon Stacey – Hinckley & Bosworth BC
Cllr David W Thorpe - Hinckley & Bosworth BC

Ex Officio

Ms Ranjana Kachhela – Leicestershire C.C. (Adult Social Care)

Staff

Joan Bailey	Clerical Assistant (to June 06)
Ian Barker	Technical Adviser – Plumbing and Heating
Suzanna Bresnihan	Housing Adviser (to October 06)
Michael Burnage	Housing Adviser (from November 06)
Stewart Cawson	Technical Adviser
Margaret Liddington	Housing Adviser
Mo Murray	Secretary/Director
Heather Rainer	Administrator
Julie Smith	Housing Adviser
Frances Ward	Administrative Assistant
Bill Wiltshire	Technical Adviser (from August 06)

Funders

North West Leicestershire DC
Hinckley & Bosworth BC
Leicestershire Supporting People
Leicestershire County Council – Adult Social Care

Auditors Rogers Spencer and Co **Bankers** Co-operative Bank plc

Introduction

During the year the team has shown on a daily basis the practical ways we support and assist older, disabled and younger vulnerable people to remain in their own homes. The number of enquiries exceeded all previous records – 1275 across both North West Leicestershire and Hinckley and Bosworth. This has kept the team at full stretch. We are delighted to report that once again over 98% of our clients surveyed reported that they would use Care & Repair again or recommend the service to others.

Staffing

For some time we have been aware that we lack sufficient appropriate technical staff to provide a prompt first class service to all older homeowners who request our help. Moreover we had little capacity to carry out private fee earning work to help those people who could afford to pay for work but were needing assistance. This private work is very much part of our remit to protect vulnerable older people from rogue contractors. In addition the reduction in grant funding, and the consequent loss of fee income, has severely affected our income over the years.

We have addressed this situation by employing an additional full time technical officer, Bill Wiltshire, to work alongside Stewart Cawson and Ian Barker. Unfortunately this meant that we had to do without the post of Clerical Assistant, and reluctantly made its post holder, Joan Bailey, redundant.

Bill Wiltshire joined the team; we felt the impact on our delivery of Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs) and private work immediately. Bill had taught himself Computer Aided Design, which is benefiting the quality, accuracy and speed of delivery.

We were very sorry to lose a very valued member of staff, Suzy Bresnihan, at that time. She had been with us for seven years as our Housing Adviser in Hinckley and Bosworth, and we are grateful for her long and dedicated service. As she had set up and led on the DFG contract, it was essential to recruit for the post

straightaway. Mike Burnage was appointed in her place and had to face a steep learning curve from which we are very much benefiting. Heather Rainer suffered a severe brain haemorrhage during the Christmas holiday, which we are thankful she survived. However it has impacted on the team's work and we are grateful to her for returning to work on a part time therapeutic basis.

Across the Districts

We have continued to work closely with the private sector housing teams in both North West Leicestershire and Hinckley and Bosworth. April 2006 brought the new Housing Health and Safety rating, a statutory minimum standard for housing conditions that replaced the fitness standard as an element of Decent Homes. By introducing this, the Government is hoping to increase the number of vulnerable households living in decent homes in the private sector. Most of our activity continues to be in Hinckley and Bosworth where we have worked hard with our colleagues to get to grips with this new challenge. However the new standard has not yet been adopted in North West Leicestershire, where we have less work despite our best efforts.

Our work on welfare benefits has continued to change over the past few years. We used to be actively involved in helping clients complete application forms for Pension Credit, Attendance Allowance etc. However other agencies, notably Age Concern and the Pensions Service, now also offer this service and have become specialists in this work. We therefore normally ascertain eligibility for a claim and refer people on to others, thus enabling us to concentrate on our own specialities. 88 clients have been assisted to claim successfully both directly or through the assistance of other agencies, mainly Attendance Allowance, bringing them some £150k of additional income.

Charnwood does not have a Home Improvement Agency but this year we are administering applications for their Home Safety Grants.

North West Leicestershire

Repairs Grants have continued to be available for our clients; 71 were assisted with £104k of work, an average of just under £1,500 each. The definition of eligible work was restrictive, only allowing

works to make homes 'wind and weather tight'. This left those homeowners with dangerous electricity or poor plumbing, in a difficult position. However Julie Smith, our Housing Adviser, has worked hard and given people confidence to use their savings, either to top up a grant or to pay privately. This success has meant that few of those people who have been identified as eligible for charitable funds have taken up our offer of assistance.

Hinckley and Bosworth

It was September before Councillors approved the Private Sector Housing policy and all the necessary forms and procedures were put in place for Minor Works Assistance. These are interest free repayable loans of up to £5k to carry out necessary works. The new rules mean repeat applications cannot be made for 5 years, and therefore we have had to find additional new clients. Although we did our best to spend the 2006/7 allocation we were not able to do so. We finished off the last two Renovations under the old policy but the new Major Works Assistance programme is still being developed.

We completed 40 DFGs for clients who ranged from young children to very elderly people.

Handyperson Service

The Handyperson service, which was first set up in 1995, has continued to provide excellent help for our clients. Over 254 jobs were completed by our team of self employed trades people. The service has only ever been funded by clients and charitable money and there has been no core funding for the administration, undertaken by Frances Ward. A review of the service is currently underway to enable us to target the service more accurately at those in greatest need, whilst providing value for money and recovering our administration costs.

Leicestershire Safe at Home and Security

During the year, partnerships with Help the Aged and others flourished. Some 423 homes of older people in North West Leicestershire, Charnwood and Hinckley and Bosworth were made safer, while in Blaby the Community Safety Partnership funded security measures for 60 older people.

Projects with younger people also developed. This began in Blaby but gradually schemes were put in place in the other Districts.

These provided basic security measures for vulnerable younger households, many of them victims of domestic violence or anti social behaviour. Together with PC Ashley Russell, Crime Reduction Coordinator, we worked hard to develop a Sanctuary scheme, providing enhanced security to people who could be made homeless due to domestic violence. This was initially in Charnwood but there was also interest in the rest of our Districts. Unfortunately these plans came to nothing as none could provide the funding. However we hope to revive this initiative with Charnwood next year.

Telecare

The Government introduced a new assistive technology fund and we have been involved in the planning of development of services across Leicestershire. We tendered to run a mobile telecare demonstration service to deliver a service using a specially adapted outreach vehicle to demonstrate products from the SIGNAL flat and lifelines etc. We had to withdraw our tender due to the tight implementation timetable.

Financial position

The challenge of delivering a Home Improvement Agency service that addresses the needs of older and vulnerable homeowners came under particular pressure during the year. This was due to the standstill budgets of Leicestershire Supporting People, coupled with a reduction in grants and loans available to our clients in Hinckley and Bosworth. We could not sustain the consequent reduction in the fee income for the Association, as our reserves were in danger of falling below minimum levels.

Our funding partners, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council; Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire Supporting People and North West Leicestershire District Council, responded positively to the pressure we were under. They assured us of the value they place upon our services and provided ongoing commitments to the purchase of our services linked to service level agreements. Their positive response, coupled with the hard work of all the team, has averted the very real threat to the continuation of Care and Repair.

Coming of Age - 21st birthday

In September we celebrated twenty-one years of providing our HIA service. Many of the individuals involved with our agency during the last twenty-one years, including our founders, statutory authority funders, agency partners and clients joined us in our celebration at Snibston Discovery Park. Our clients were fulsome in their praise of our service conveying how we have given them the confidence to remain independent, while continuing to live in their own homes. A report 'Coming of Age. 21 Years of a Home Improvement Agency', coordinated and funded by Building and Social Housing Foundation (BSHF), was launched at the event providing a summary of our activities during the last twenty-one years.

Publicity and promotion

The "Coming of Age" report was widely circulated. Its publication and our birthday event brought us a good deal of positive publicity; articles and pictures appeared in all the local papers and there was a steady increase in referrals. An article in VISION, North West Leicestershire's free magazine delivered to every household, advertised our private service and brought many enquiries, although few wanted private work. We also developed and launched our own website: www.carerepair.org.uk.

Fuel poverty

We have continued with our best efforts to assist our clients to access WarmFront grants, principally for central heating. This national scheme has had many problems. We completed a radiator panel project for NW Leicestershire in Measham under its "Heat Street project". It is good to report that ENERGYVISION and Leicester Loans interest free loans are constantly in demand.

Performance

This was the second year of our three-year business plan for 2005/8. We not only achieved our performance indicators, which are part of our Service Level Agreements, but also achieved many of the targets we set ourselves as outlined in this report.

Conclusion

We have survived a very challenging year and look forward with some confidence. We are very hopeful that the Government's reforms of the DFG programme will bring simplification of the application forms and better access to assistance for disabled people. In addition it is hoped that we can develop more projects and bring in additional income, which will enable the service to be available for more older and vulnerable people. We are hopeful that our relationship in North West Leicestershire will develop and that we will be delivering DFGs and other works there.

Finally, on a personal note, this is my last report as I am leaving Care & Repair in September after eighteen years. I feel that I have achieved all that I can and hope that a new Director will bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm to the Association. I would like to thank everyone who has worked along side me - staff, committee, funders, partners, colleagues, contractors and clients. Together we have ensured that we continuously deliver services of which we can be proud.

Mo Murray
Director
June 2007

These studies demonstrate the importance of gaining people's trust over a long period of time and giving them the confidence and practical help to stay in their homes with an enhanced quality of life.

Mrs A an 85 year old widow has had building work done to her semi detached home through Care and Repair for over ten years. We visited her again at her request in August. We found that she needed and was eligible for further Grant work. Schedules were prepared and builders approached for quotes. However this case illustrates that all does not necessarily go according to plan. The work was delayed due to the lack of response from one of our contractors to our numerous requests for a quote. This in turn delayed the grant process, as money had run out until the following year's allocation. Eventually a new contractor was found and work is well underway, rewarding Mrs A's patience.

In contrast work on her heating system went smoothly. She was referred to Warmfront, as her system was old with controls that were difficult to operate. A Grant was awarded to replace the boiler but there was a shortfall of £440. Mrs A offered to pay this rather than apply for a charitable grant and the work was soon done, much to her delight.

Getting building work completed sometimes requires a great deal of perseverance and in cases like this we ensure that our clients are always kept in the picture. When we have problems of this kind, it reminds us of how daunting it must be for people to undertake and pay for building work, let alone see it through, when they do not have an agency to rely on.

Mrs B has also had regular help and support from us for over ten years. Due to macular degeneration, she has very poor eyesight that severely limits her activities and is depressing for her. It is therefore particularly important to her to feel safe. We arranged for additional security measures through Safe At Home. However her main entrance door, at the rear of the house, became a worry, as it did not feel safe to her. She did not qualify for a grant, partly because the timber was not technically 'rotten'. Mrs B agreed for us to contact the Royal British Legion, which funded a new door, leaving her with much greater peace of mind.

In contrast **Mrs C** was a new client who felt very nervous to the extent that she would not let anyone have her telephone number. We gained her confidence on our first visit and referred her to Social Services for bath aids and to Safe At Home for a door chain. We enabled her to get an Attendance Allowance and Council Tax Benefit.

A repair grant paid for her to have the defective soffits and fascias on her house replaced. This work was done by a contractor already known to her – he did such a good job that he is now on our Approved list. A PRIDE (emergency help call) alarm was incorporated into the grant. In addition we got a drain cover on her driveway altered through our Handyperson scheme – this cover had caused her to trip and break an arm in the past so the work was particularly appreciated.

All in all our work enabled Mrs C to feel safe and confident in her surroundings, which was very rewarding for Care and Repair.

Mr P is 82 and lives alone in the premises that he used to trade from. He has had considerable health problems including two heart attacks, and was not in receipt of Benefits. He first came to us five years ago. Through Care and Repair he applied for and received Council Tax Benefit, this entitled him to central heating and loft insulation from Warmfront, and considerable repair work through Council grants.

He contacted us again in December, as he was due to go into hospital for a second knee replacement. He wanted his bathroom adapted so that he could come home in the knowledge that he could maintain his personal cleanliness in safety. As he was wanting to pay for the work himself we were able to fulfil this request to get the work done in a matter of weeks thanks to the prompt response of our Technical Officer and the contractor. This prompt response to need is very much appreciated. In a similar situation, we were able to arrange a level access shower for an elderly couple within nine weeks and were told, 'This service could not be improved. It was excellent. Thank you.'

NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

Source of Referral	06/07	05/06
Self/other household member Relation/Neighbour	601	357
Occupational Therapist	1	0
Adult Social Care	7	17
Homecare	2	7
LA Environmental Health/Private Sector Housing	8	21
LA Housing/Housing Association	0	0
Building Society/Bank	0	0
Health/Primary Care Trust	3	3
Voluntary Organisation	20	14
WarmFront	1	0
Builder/Contractor	0	7
Councillor	2	0
Other (includes Police, press articles)	32	12
Total number of enquiries	677	438

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH

Source of Referral	06/07	05/06
Self/other household member Relation/Neighbour	424	378
Occupational Therapist	74	51
Adult Social Care	5	13
Homecare	2	2
LA Environmental Health/Private Sector Housing	53	47
LA Housing/Housing Association	1	1
Building Society/Bank	0	0
Health/Primary Care Trust	2	1
Voluntary Organisation	21	24
<u>WarmFront</u>	0	0
Builder/Contractor	1	0
Councillor	1	0
Other (includes Police, press articles)	14	28

Total number of enquiries	598	545
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NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF FINANCE

	<u>2006/7</u>		<u>2005/6</u>	
	£	No*	£	No*
Local Authority				
Renovation Loans	1,874	1	-	-
Repairs Grants	103,826	71	91,702	59
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)	-	-	-	-
Sub Total	105,700		91,702	
DSS Community Care Grants	-	-	-	-
Charity/Hardship/Handyperson	4,497	239	6,945	141
Insurance	-	-	-	-
Client	65,845	346	63,343	213
Bank /Building Society	-	-	-	-
Sub Total	70,382		70,288	
Grand Total	176,042		161,990	
Total number of jobs completed		398*		249*

* Some work is financed from more than one source.

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH

SOURCES AND AMOUNTS OF FINANCE

	<u>2006/7</u>		<u>2005/6</u>	
	£	No*	£	No*
Local Authority				
Major Works Assistance	39,535	2	129,602	8
Minor Works Assistance	32,798	17	32,597	19
Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)	260,830	40	210,826	33
Sub Total	333,163		373,025	
Charity/Hardship/Handyperson Insurance	9,143	122	22,328	101
Client	-	-	-	-
Bank/Building Society	63,364	171	33,651	142
Social Services (DFG) grant	-	-	-	-
Sub Total	72,507		55,979	
Grand Total	495,670		429,004	
Total number of jobs completed		229*		192*

* Some work is financed from more than one source.

