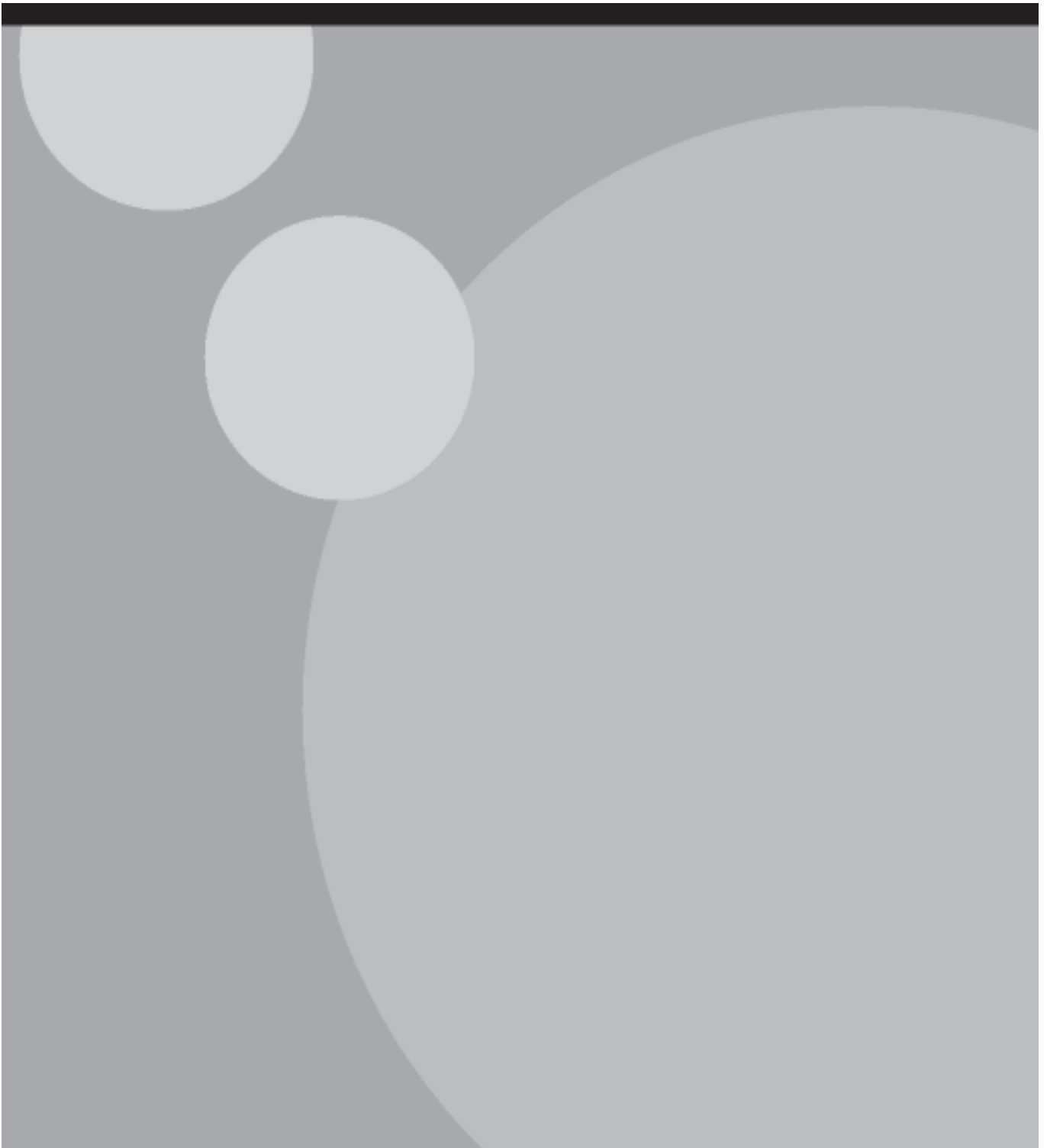


Handypersons Evaluation

Interim key findings





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This study was carried out by Karen Croucher and Karin Lowson at the University of York. The views in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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Background and overview of the handypersons evaluation

Handypersons carry out small home repairs and minor adaptations to help older and disabled people to remain living independently in their own home. Typical services include:

- odd jobs (putting up curtain rails or shelves)
- falls and accident prevention checks and remedial action
- assistance with hospital discharge services – for example moving beds and furniture
- home safety checks
- home security improvements
- energy efficiency checks
- fire safety such as installation of smoke alarms, electric blanket checks, chip pan/fat fryer exchange
- signposting clients to other services.

In 2009/10 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) introduced a handypersons grant allocating approximately £13m in 2009/10 and £17m in 2010/11 to local authorities in England. This funding was made available to help kick-start handyperson services where they didn't exist and to build capacity and range of services where they did. From April 2011, handypersons funding will be rolled into Formula Grant.¹

Alongside this funding, DCLG commissioned the Centre for Housing Policy and York Health Economics Consortium, at the University of York, to undertake an independent evaluation of the national programme. The evaluation will measure the success and value for money of the programme, and whether needs of clients were met. It will also assemble evidence on setting up and operating successful services.

This briefing summarises the findings from the first year of evaluation, comprising results of a review of the literature, surveys of local authorities and service providers, and case study interviews with key stakeholders, including service providers, in local authorities.

¹ The national allocations for Housing Strategy for Older People are as follows; £15.5m in 2011/12, £13.5m in 2012/13, £11.5m in 2013/14, £10.5m in 2014/05. Figures are taken from the table contained in the letter, dated 20 October 2010, from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to all local authority leaders following the Spending Review.
www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/srlettersoscouncilleaders

Existing evidence on the value of handy person services²

The literature review found strong evidence about the impact of handy person type interventions on improved wellbeing, independent living and easier access to appropriate services. For example evidence of:

- small home repairs on reducing the risk of falls
- home security improvements on preventing burglaries
- minor home adaptations on reducing falls
- hospital discharge (where such services include trip hazard assessment and intervention, grab rail installation and other minor repairs) on reducing falls
- hospital discharge on maintaining independent living
- installation of smoke alarms on reducing death and injury caused by fires.

These preventative services are cost effective, for example:

- postponing entry into residential care by a year saves on average £28,080 per person³
- preventing a fall leading to a hip fracture saves the state £28,665 on average⁴
- housing adaptations reduce the costs of home care (saving £1,200 to £29,000 a year)⁵
- hospital discharge services speed up patient release, saving at least £120 a day.⁶

Overview of DCLG funded handy person services

Around half of all local authorities and 110 service providers participated in the survey on the impact of the first year of DCLG funding. The findings indicate that DCLG handy person funds have met the original aims of the programme; expanding capacity, geographical coverage and range of services provided to the targeted groups:

- The groups targeted for receipt of services were mostly older and disabled people, and those discharged from hospital (see figure 1).

² Evidence taken from the Handypersons Financial Benefits Toolkit, published by DCLG in March 2010. www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/financialbenefitstoolkit

³ Lang and Buisson (2008) Annual Cost of Care Home Report.

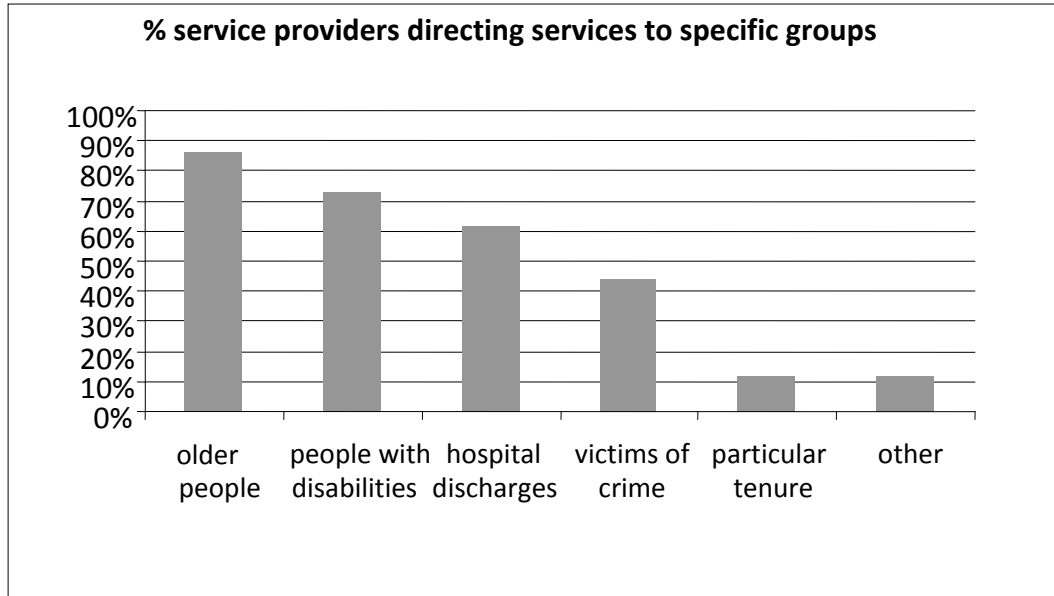
⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Personal Social Sciences Research Unit for Department of Health (2010) National evaluation of POPPs.

- Secondary data from local client surveys and evaluations show handy-person services are consistently highly rated by clients and hard to reach groups.

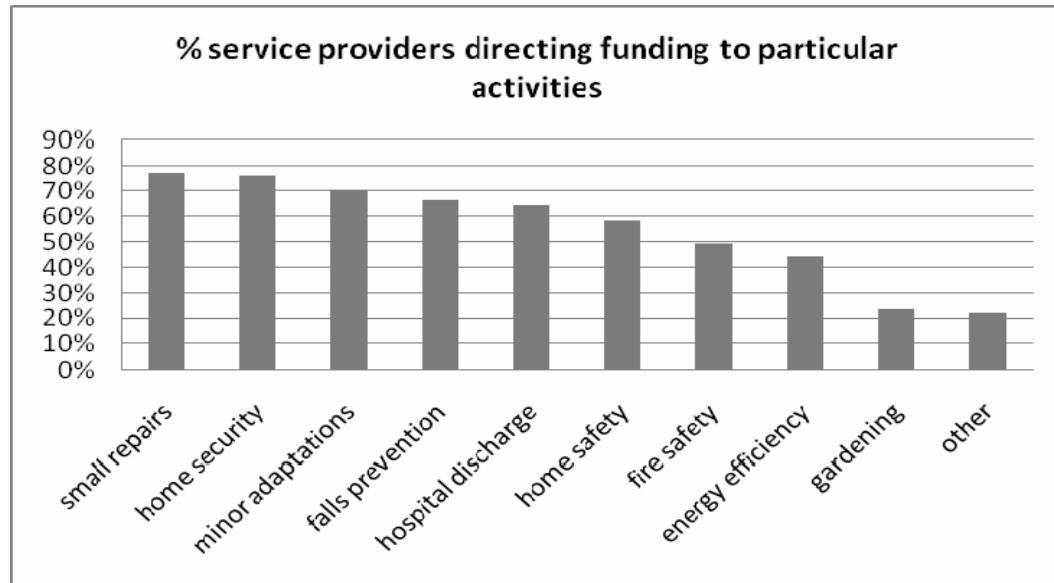
Figure 1: Groups to which service providers directed DCLG funding



Note: Providers may have directed funding to a number of groups therefore percentages do not sum to 100%.

- Services delivered were mostly small home repairs, minor adaptations and home security measures (see figure 2), with local variation in the types of services offered.

Figure 2: Activities to which service providers directed DCLG funding



Note: Providers may have directed funding to a number of activities therefore percentages do not sum to 100%.

- The majority of services used funding to employ additional front line handypersons. An average of 2.5 additional persons were employed per handyperson scheme.

Three broad models of delivery have been observed in the case studies to date: in-house services provided by the local authority; provision by a Housing Association or another independent provider under contract with one or more local authorities; and grants to individual clients who will purchase services from an independent contractor, or another provider of handyperson services.

Value for money

- Overall spend by local authorities on handyperson services increased by 48 per cent between 2008/09 and 2009/10. The DCLG handyperson funds received represented 43 per cent of spend on handyperson services in 2009/10.
- The average cost per client⁷ was £90 for those service providers able to identify the impact of DCLG funding, and £100 for those unable to identify the impact of DCLG funding separate from other handyperson funding received. Cost per job would produce a lower figure as a client may receive several visits and benefit from several activities: the average number of jobs per client was 1.5. These average costs are comparable to other handyperson services.⁸

The final evaluation report, due in autumn 2011, will include full analysis of the value for money of the national programme using the information collected from local authorities and providers to feed through the DCLG Handypersons Financial Benefits Toolkit. Below is an example from the literature of how this approach to demonstrating value for money has been used at a local level in one handyperson service.

⁷ The costs were calculated excluding outliers.

⁸ For example a survey of HIA run handyperson services in 2007/08 found the average cost per job was between £70 - £90:

www-foundations.uk.com/files/resources/future_hia_booklets/Handyperson%20services.pdf

Figure 3: Example – using the Handyperson Financial Benefits Toolkit⁹

Handyperson service with funding of £394,000, which was used by 2,317 households in a single year.

Benefits calculated on the assumption that:

- 224 falls prevented
- 2 burglaries prevented
- reduction of fuel poverty
- prevention of 39 people moving into sheltered accommodation and care homes
- reduction in hospital stays for 10 people.

Financial benefits calculated:¹⁰

- £51,000 for local householders from reduction of fuel poverty and reduced burglaries
- £455,000 to social services
- £162,000 for health from reduced falls
- £3,000 to police.

Total benefits calculated as £671,000

What makes a successful service?

Although work is still in progress on the case studies, there are a number of emerging messages about how to measure the success of a service and what contributes to making a service successful:

- Effective and innovative management and team working. The attitudes and skills of front line staff, not just in performing the handyperson tasks, but also in working with vulnerable people are important to clients.

“They [clients] may not see anybody else apart from a handyperson... Handypersons are the face of the service, they are not just doing a ‘handyperson’ job.” (Service Manager)

- Use of feedback from clients. Many service providers seek regular feedback from their clients, usually through surveys but also case studies. The data collated has been found to be immensely useful in building the case for services with local commissioners, informing service providers about how well their service is working and identifying areas for improvement.
- Ensuring high levels of awareness of the services, by linking with other local services and groups.

⁹ Example taken from Manchester Care & Repair in relation to some of their handyperson services.

¹⁰ Figures rounded to nearest 1,000.

- Gaining the support of local communities. As one commissioner observed, the district handyperson service was so well supported by the local community, including the Older People’s Forum and local councillors, that:

“There would be people out protesting in the streets if anything happened to this service...”

Sustainability and charging

Service providers in case study interviews indicated uncertainty over future funding of handyperson services given these are non-statutory services. Providers and commissioners were keen to identify further sources of funding. One example was health, where savings through prevention and early intervention could be demonstrated. Support for people following hospital discharge was seen as a key area of work where clear cost savings to health could be demonstrated.

In addition the survey of local authorities and providers found that over half of service providers charged clients for their handyperson services, often on a subsidised basis. Criteria for charging included client groups (e.g. vulnerable or those with disabilities may not be charged) and income level (of which various definitions were adopted). Mechanisms for charging included:

- for labour costs (e.g. a fixed rate or an hourly rate)
- according to type of job (e.g. some providers did not charge for services associated with hospital discharge or home safety checks)
- for non-labour costs (e.g. charging materials at cost or for travel).

Case study interviews indicated a range of views on the desirability of charging for services.

Conclusions

These interim findings show that the DCLG funded handyperson schemes offer valuable services for older and disabled people. Emerging messages for success highlight:

- the importance of innovative management and effective teams
- using feedback from clients
- gaining the support of local communities and linking with other services and groups
- promoting to a range of commissioners and other organisations
- demonstrating the preventative nature of handyperson services in avoiding costs elsewhere.