



Cambs Home Improvement Agency  
Annual Report 2019 - 2020

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# Introduction

## by our Lead Councillors

Another fantastic year saw Cambs HIA continue to build on its relationship with other Health, Housing and Social Care partners resulting in the councils' extending the Shared Agency Service for a further three years until 2022.

With grants totalling £3.4m across Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire, the time people are waiting to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist has improved.

The average time to complete adaptations has reduced by half in the last 3 years.

Building on the 2019 *Adaptations Without Delay* publication by the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT), Level 4 Trusted Assessors at the Agency have attended training alongside Occupational Therapy colleagues to enhance their understanding of how to complete non-complex assessments.

Cambs HIA has also supported more residents who are not eligible for grant funding in the last 12 months, supporting the self funded market and increasing independence for *all* residents of Cambridgeshire as well as those on low incomes.

Two new Specialist Housing Advisors support those who need to move instead of adapting their homes. The roles which are covered in this report, have enabled people to relocate to more suitable housing supported by Relocation Grants administered by Cambs HIA.

The Agency was awarded **South Cambridgeshire District Council's 2019 Team of The Year** in recognition of the improvements that they have made in supporting elderly and disabled people in our communities.

Cllr. Richard Johnson  
Cambridge  
City Council



Cllr. Hazel Smith  
South Cambridgeshire  
District Council



Cllr. Ryan Fuller  
Huntingdonshire  
District Council



# Governance

In 2012, Cambs Home Improvement Agency was the first shared service in Cambridgeshire, combining South Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire and Cambridge City Councils.

## Our Management Board:



**Helen Reed,**  
Housing Strategy  
Manager,  
**Cambridge City  
Council**



**Finlay Flett,**  
Operational  
Manager,  
**Huntingdonshire  
District Council**



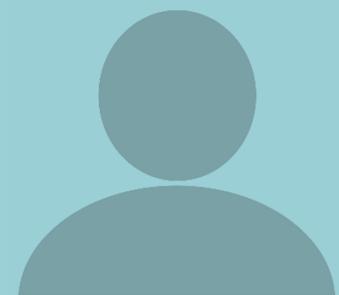
**Julie Fletcher,**  
Head of Housing  
Strategy,  
**South Cambs  
District Council**



**Lisa Sparks,**  
Commissioner  
(Adults),  
**Cambridgeshire  
County Council**



**Frances Swann,**  
Manager,  
**Cambs Home  
Improvement  
Agency**



**Julia Hovells,**  
Principal  
Accountant,  
**Cambridge City  
Council.**

# Welcome

Welcome to our Annual Review for Cambs Home Improvement Agency. This review provides an update on the work completed in the previous 12 months.

## A Message from Our Manager, Frances Swann:

Cambs HIA is continuing to improve. The time taken to complete adaptations valued at <£10,000 took an average of 16 weeks in 19/20 and 23 weeks for those valued at >£10 000.

There were fewer referrals in 19/20, resulting in the agency marketing grants more than in previous years. Whilst collectively the Better Care Fund (BCF) Allocation for Disabled Facility Grants was fully spent, demand in Cambridge City was lower than expected and continuously higher in Huntingdonshire.

The Agency completed a lot of staff training in 2019/20 and introduced a new Trainee Surveyor role.

We hosted and visited other HIA's across the region to share and develop best practice and I was pleased to be invited to be a guest speaker at the Foundations Annual Roadshow in London.

We look forward to 2020/21 and all the challenges it presents both in terms of our response to the Coronavirus and in preparation for a new IT system.

As always, my thanks to all the staff and partners who support our work.



# About Us

The agency completed £3.3m worth of adaptations in our client's homes. £2.8m of this came from the government to ensure disabled adults and children can remain living independently in their own homes. This represents 63% of the county's total allocation.

Cambs HIA continues to provide information and advice and refer clients on to other services who can meet their broader health and well-being needs. We have also worked with the new Specialist Housing Advisors to identify people who could be offered advice and support to move to more suitable properties.

Cambs HIA also delivered £149,000 of repairs for householders across Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire – this includes replacing boilers, roof repairs and remedying problems with damp or improving energy efficiency.



## South Cambs District Council's Team of the Year Award

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, the team were honoured with winning the South Cambs District Council's Team of the Year Award for the vast improvements that have been made to the service provided by considerably slashing timescales for both minor and major adaptations across all three districts.

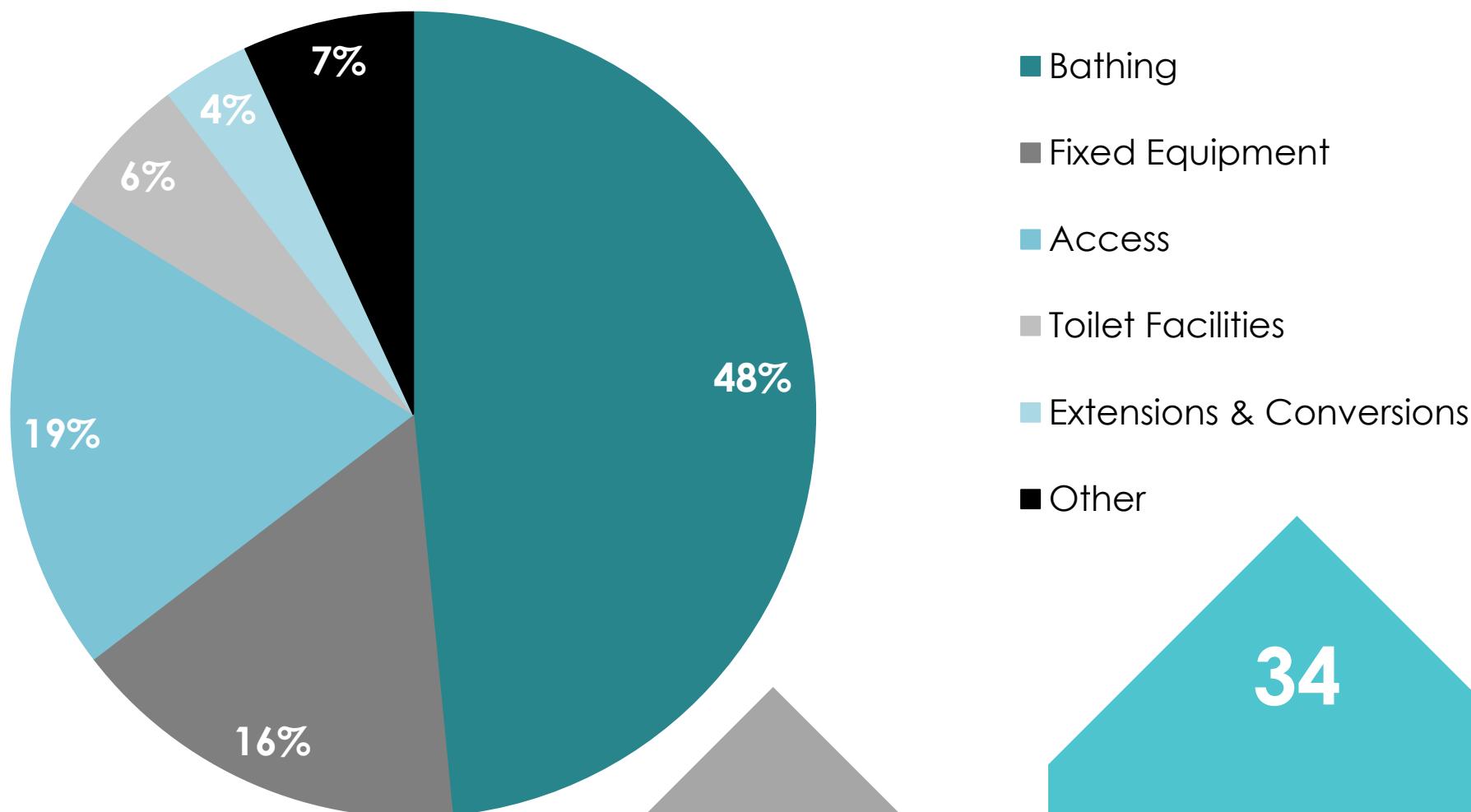
# 2019 – 2020: Highlights

## Completed Works

In 2019/20 we enabled **352** disabled and elderly people to adapt their homes.

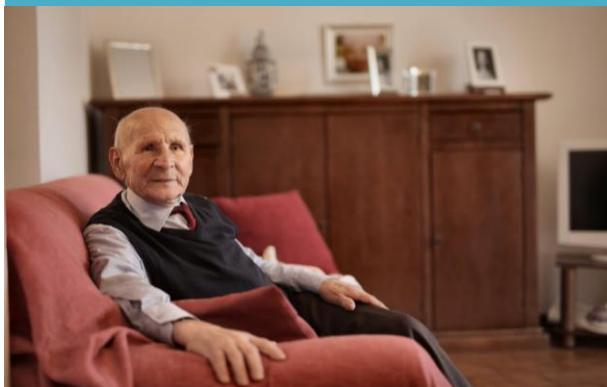
Cambs HIA also supports clients to identify ways of funding work which exceeds the upper limit of £30,000 per grant.

## Types of DFG completed



18

Private jobs completed for clients ineligible for a grant



27

Repair grants completed in South Cambridgeshire & Cambridge City



34

Disabled Facilities Grants completed for disabled CHILDREN across all 3 districts.

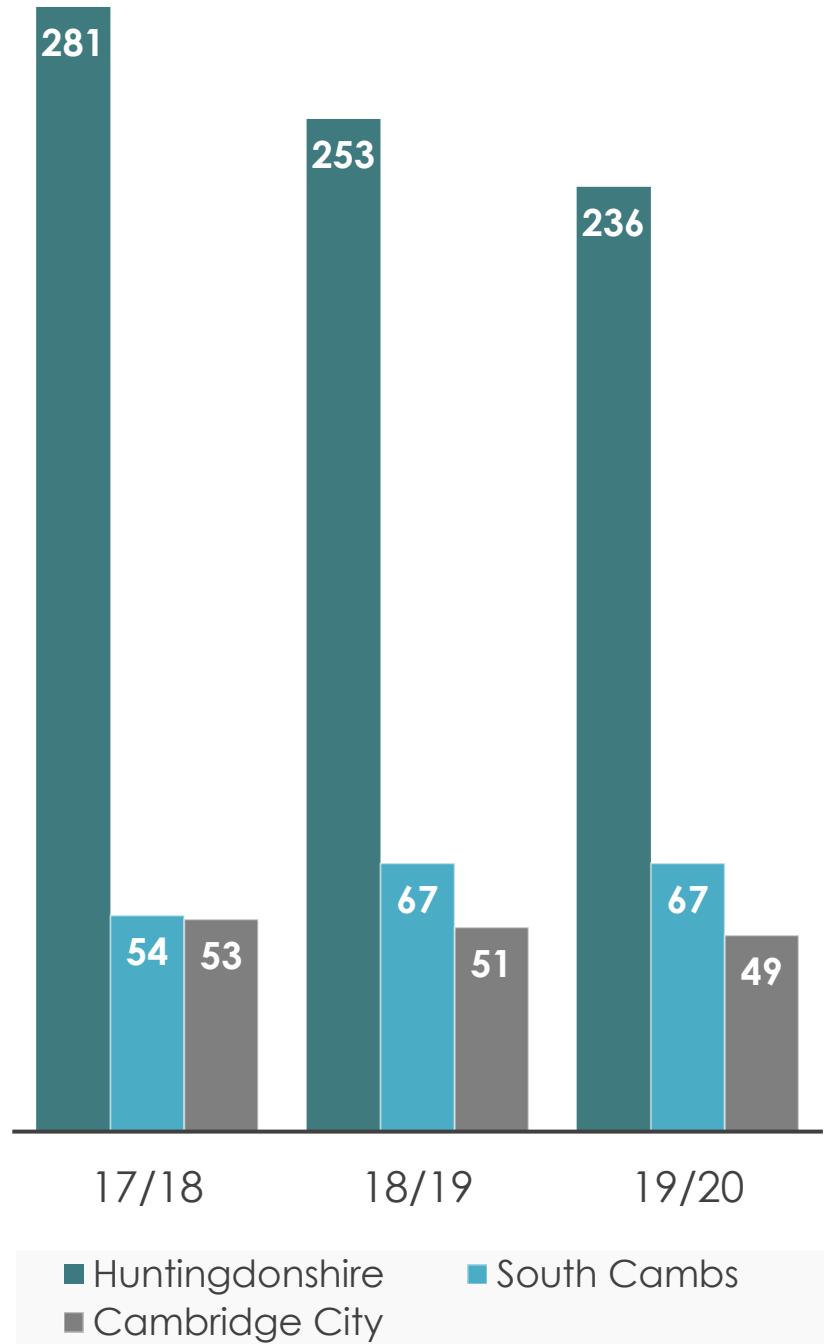


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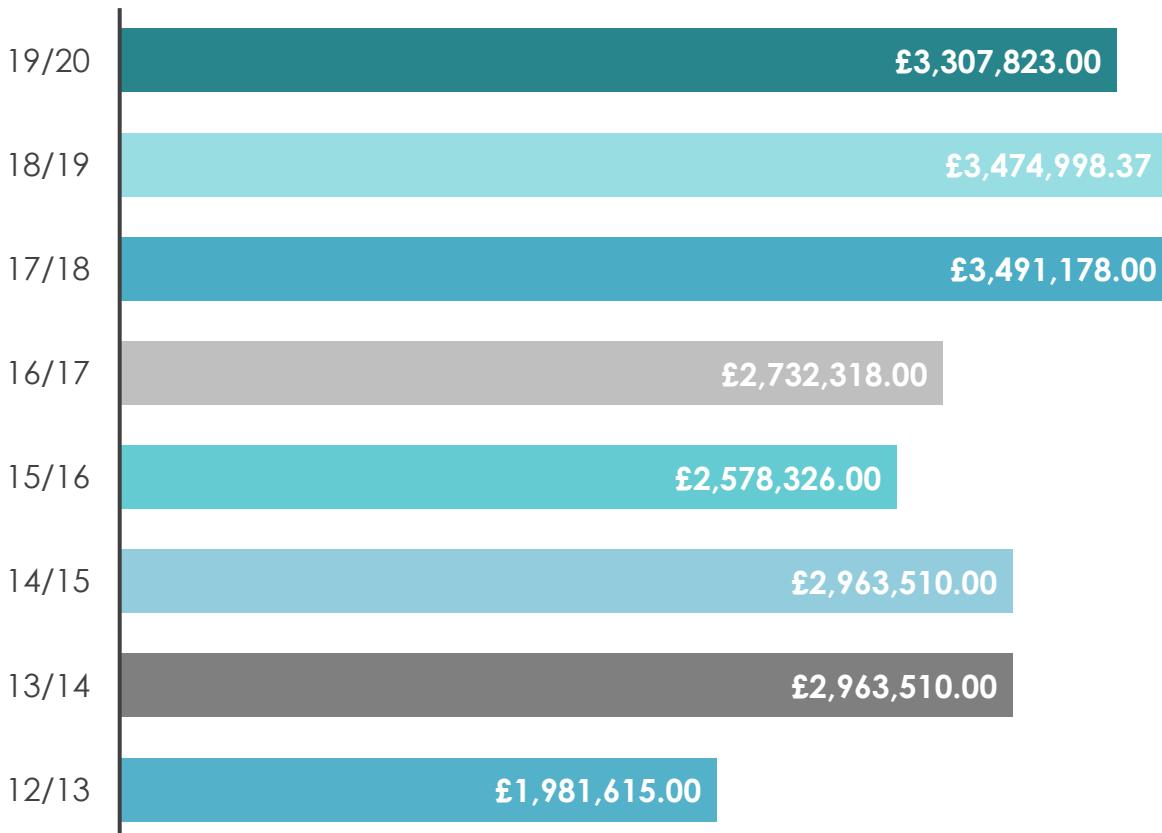
preliminary test of recourses completed to check client eligibility



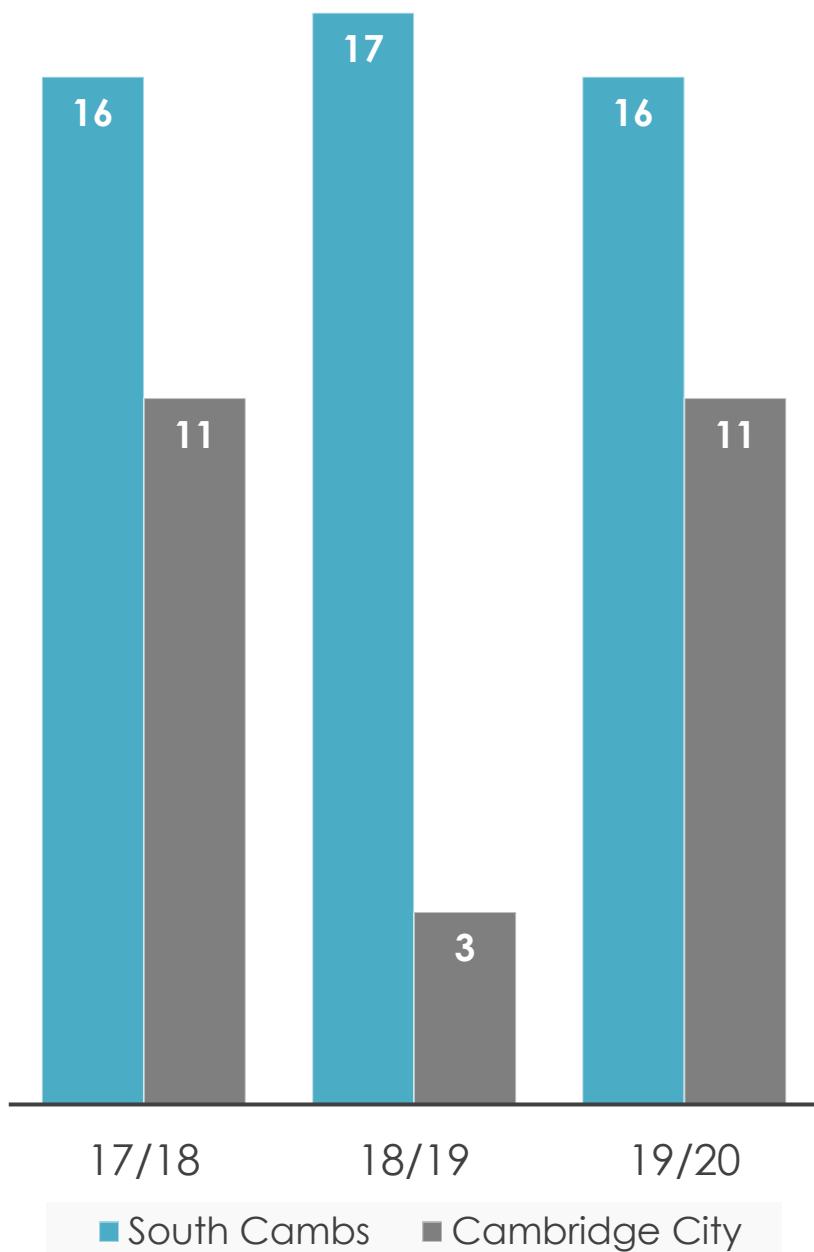
## Disabled Facilities Grants Completed



## DFG Spend

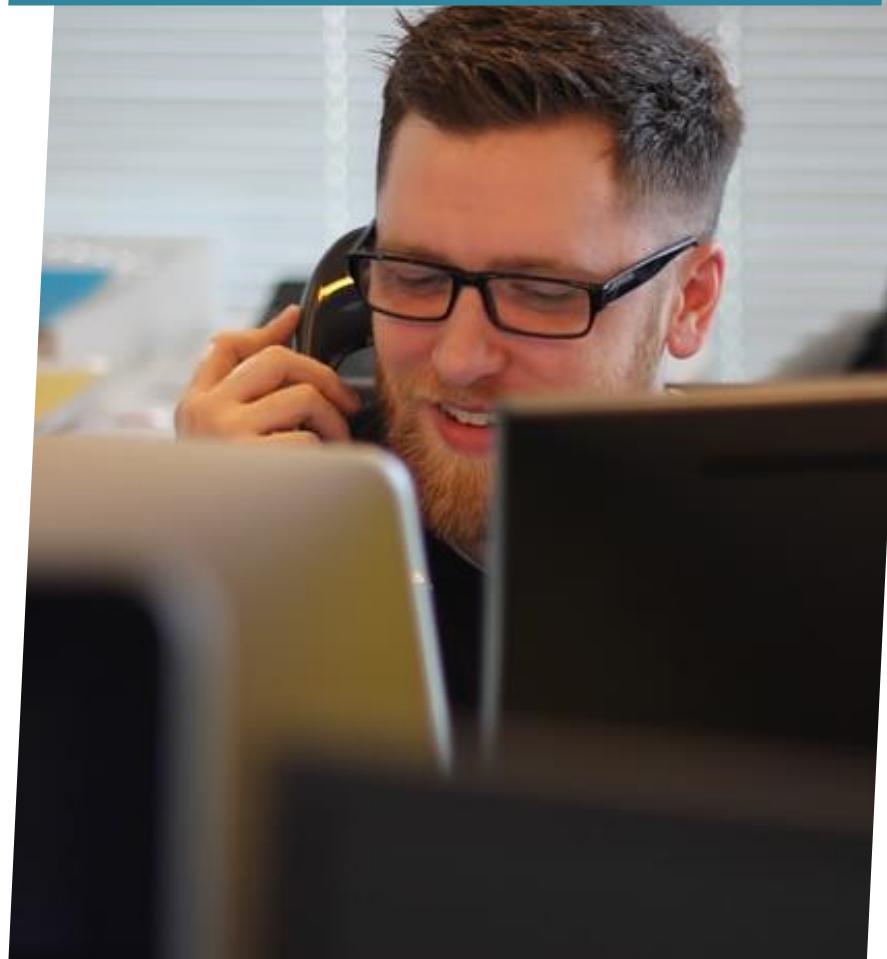


## Repairs Grants Completed



# 9,000

phone calls were answered by the agency in 2019/20



“Thank you so much for all the home improvements you have done for me. It is going to make a huge difference for me this winter. I have felt the benefit already!”

## Onward referrals

We made **67** onward referrals last year to help people:



**Get housing advice**



**Claim benefits they are entitled to**



**Request fire safety checks**



**Improve their home security**



**Install a Community Alarm**

# Working with Others



## Sam Lee

### SEND Housing Advisor

Cambridgeshire County Council

The SEND Specialist Housing Advisors (previously one full time position but now 2 part time positions) are part of the Disability Social Care 0-25 Service in Cambridgeshire County Council. This role supports families to think about their housing needs as early as possible and understand their options, so they can plan for the future as their child gets older (and bigger!).

We work with families, housing providers, District Councils, Occupational Therapists, health colleagues and Social Workers to support their move to a property that will suit them now and in the future. We support families to think about what their future home needs to be like, access to education,

opportunities in the community for the child or young person as they get older, transport and other support the family may have as well as being realistic about their choices and availability of properties. We can support with the decision making process, navigating the various systems, thinking about different renting and purchasing options and the practical aspects of planning and actually moving house.

This year we have supported 54 families to move into a home that suits them better. These moves not only improve family life and outcomes for children but avoid spend from the DFG budget and can reduce support, transport and education costs for many years to come.



## Emma Hudson

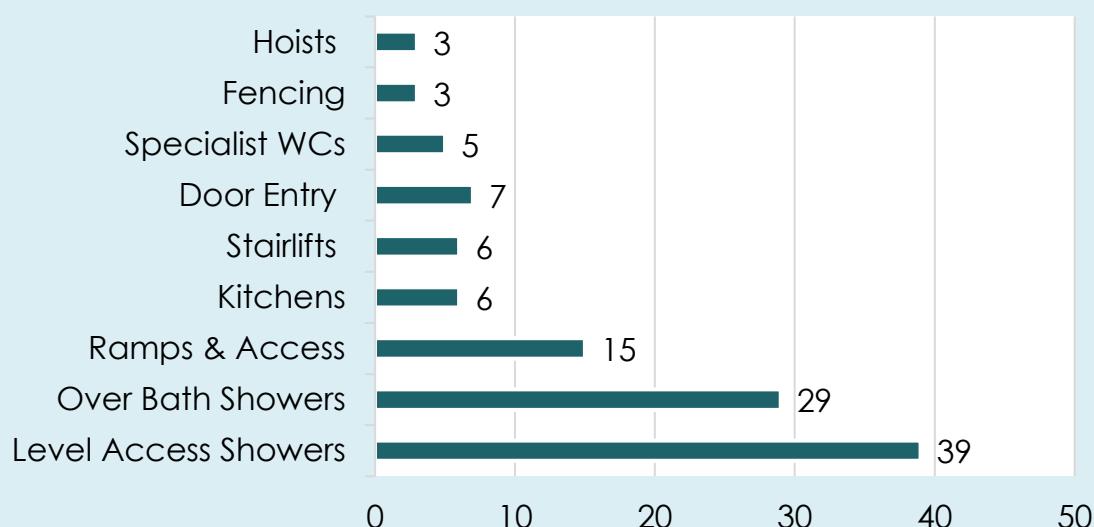
### Adaptions Officer

Cambridge City Council

In 2019/20 Cambridge City Council had a budget of £858,000 for our council homes. We managed to spend £672,000 of that budget, which included 68 bathing adaptations, as well as 7 hoist in 3 properties.

We also relocated 6 people to different houses that better suited their needs, one that also included the adaptations made in their previous home.

Works Completed 2019- 2020





## Ruth Oakley

### Specialist Housing Advisor Cambridgeshire County Council

I am the Specialist Housing Advisor-Adults (18+), based in the Adult Early Help Team at the County Council. My role evolved from the recognition of the need to help develop the early conversations around housing and its importance on the impact of people's health and wellbeing.

My role develops links with many partners to try and source suitable properties for people to rehouse too, where a significant adaptation through the DFG fund would be needed to remain independent and safe at home. Rehousing to an already adapted or suitable home, not only helps with cost saving to the DFG budget but it enables people to remain living in a suitable home, meeting their health and social care needs in the longer term.

I work very closely with Housing Providers, District Councils and Occupational Therapists by developing links and encourage rethinking to include a person's home environment, as well as the person.

To date, I have successfully moved 39 households, throughout Cambridgeshire supporting people to continue living full and independent lives in a safe and suitable home.

I also help educate other teams with knowledge on Housing, so they have the confidence to include Housing as part of their Early Conversations. I am currently working on developing Practitioner Factsheets on various housing subjects that will be available throughout CCC.

1. 197 Rehousing Case Referrals since January 2019 predominantly for adults with varying disabilities including MS, wheelchair users etc and various age related mobility/health issues.
2. 39 people rehoused since January 2019 –

majority to bungalows/level access and adapted homes including Extra Care Schemes. This also helps free up larger homes for families.

3. 21 current open cases waiting to be rehoused.
4. Cost savings – Approx. £310,000 to date of savings through adaptation avoidance only. This figure would be far greater if it included savings as result of reduced benefit payments, reduced social care packages and admissions to hospital as a result of unsuitable housing.

# Working with Others



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

## Adaptations Team

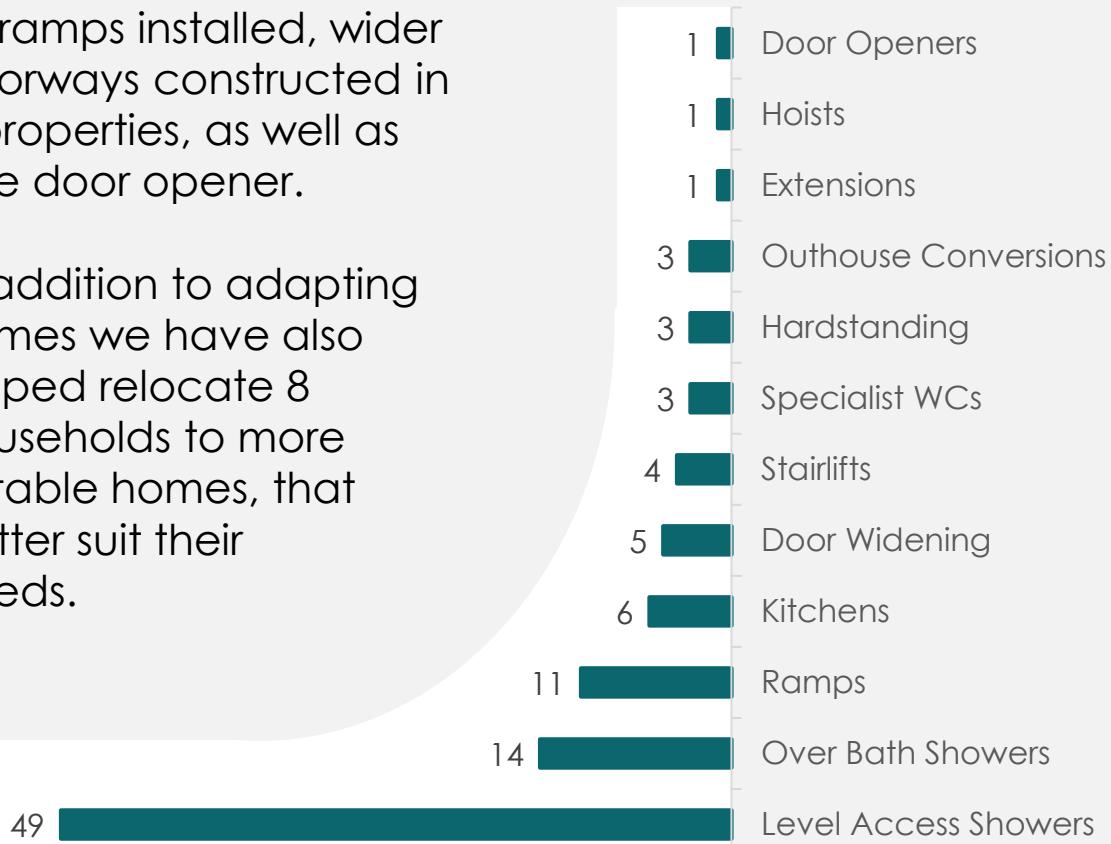
South Cambs District Council

In 2019/20 South Cambs District Council had a budget of £808,000 for our council stock. The majority of our adaptations are to help our residents bathe – we installed 49 level access showers and 14 over bath showers. Access to

their homes follows with 11 ramps installed, wider doorways constructed in 5 properties, as well as one door opener.

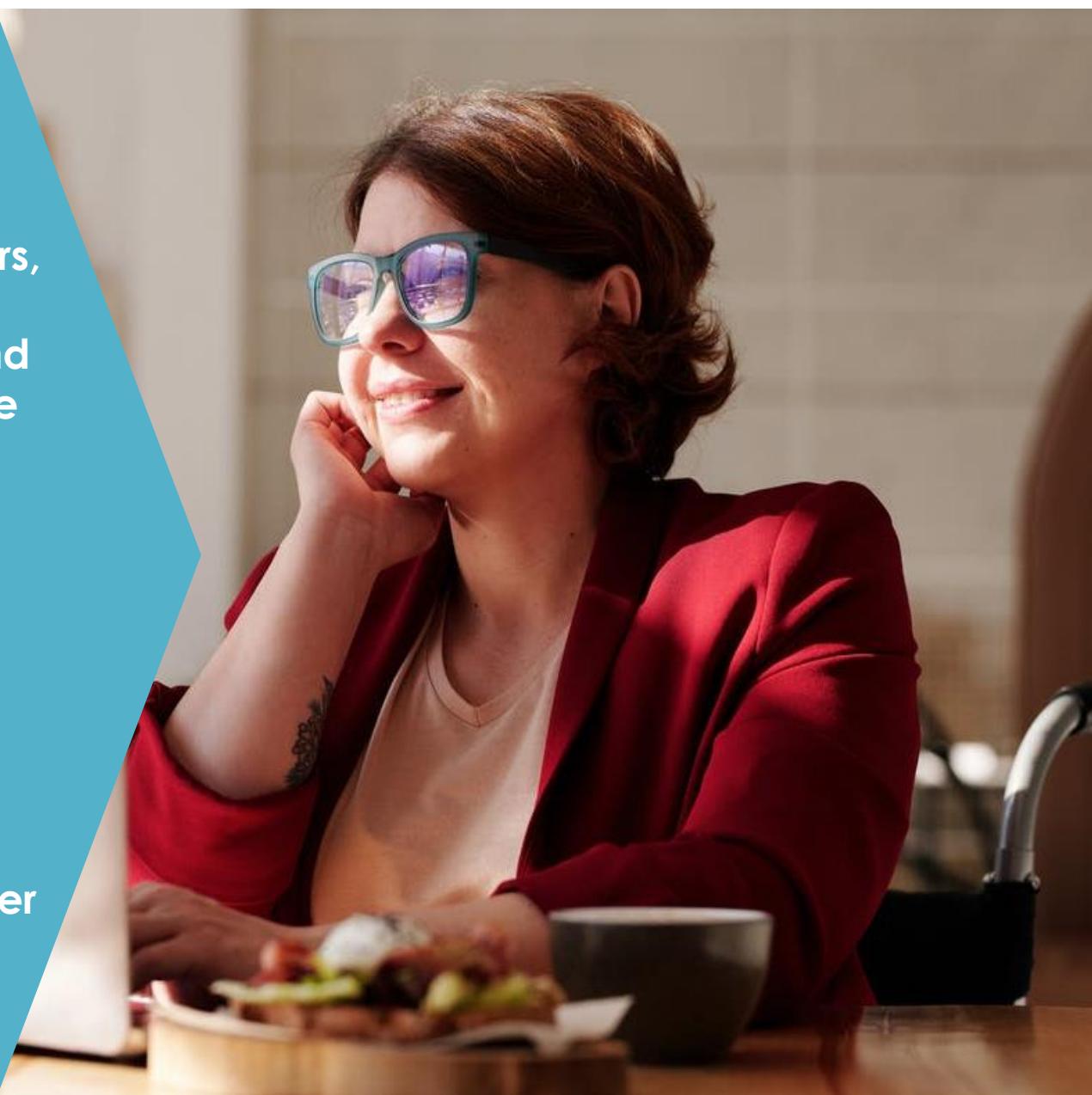
In addition to adapting homes we have also helped relocate 8 households to more suitable homes, that better suit their needs.

## Adaptations in 2019/2020



## A great message from a Complex Housing OT:

"Dear HIA and the builders, I went and reviewed [address] this morning and it's amazing – it has made such a difference to Caroline's life and she's able to sleep in her bed rather than on the sofa - she is over the moon! I appreciate all the hard work that you all did to achieve this and make a lasting difference to how she manages her pain, her condition and how she looks after her boys!"



# Self-Funders

Last year, the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) issued a new guide called Adaptations without Delay. It highlighted an increased and growing need to support self-funders to access adaptations. Self-Funders are those who are not assessed as being financially eligible for a grant, possibly because their income or occupational pensions are too high.

In 2019/20, we saw a steady increase in the number of people approaching us to help with adaptations from people assessed as needing to pay for the works themselves without any grant.

We are keen to grow this market and to make sure that older people are

supported with their adaptation needs, so we've put together a new procedure whereby our customers will be able to make staged payments for work that they are self-financing.

Self-funders also are not limited to the most cost-effective adaptation which is a requirement for those accessing grants. This means that self-funders can exercise more choice about the type of adaptation that they can afford to have in their home.

We are keen to make sure that we support all older and disabled people who cannot manage works themselves be it via the grant route or as self-funders.

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists also talked about the use of Trusted Assessors for non-complex adaptations which the team at Cambs HIA are also now trained to do.

Although there are pensioners who are experiencing poverty, Cambridgeshire is also broadly speaking an affluent area which means increasing numbers of older people are not eligible for low income benefits. We are trying to break down the myth that homeowners and people with savings can't access grants and have produced some simple case examples to help with this – that you can see on our *Explaining Eligibility* page.



**“...Thankyou for all your time, effort, patience, understanding and care. It is very much appreciated...”**

# Explaining Eligibility

One of our aims this year was to try and debunk people's perceptions that they would be ineligible for any grant funding. We set out to create and share real life examples (while hiding client's true identities).

We took a variety of scenarios showing homeowners and renters with varying amounts of savings and ages, as well as those on benefits. This showed that even with savings, people were eligible for some if not all their costs for an adaptation.

We find that homeowners especially don't realise they may be entitled to help with adapting their homes and the statistics below show how vital our service is to those who don't have much if anything in savings.

**Hello I'm Mina**

I'm 36 years old and I live in my own home with my daughter

Because I have a household income under £15,050 a year and get Child Tax Credits, I qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant from the Council to pay for access to a ground floor toilet



CHIA  
Improving Homes - Improving Lives

*45% of older homeowners who are still paying off their mortgage have no savings*

*18% of older homeowners have incomes below the poverty line*

**Hello we're Pam & Mick**

We're in our 70's and we live in our own home

We get £310.52 per week from our pensions and have £25,500 in savings. We only had to pay £1,837.43 towards a Disabled Facilities Grant from the Council to pay for an adapted kitchen



CHIA  
Improving Homes - Improving Lives

**Hello I'm Dave**

I'm 72 and I live with my son in my own home

I get £246.45 per week from my pensions and have less than £6,000 in savings. We only had to pay £1,837.43 towards a Disabled Facilities Grant from the Council to pay for a stairlift



CHIA  
Improving Homes - Improving Lives

*23% of older homeowners who have paid off their mortgage have no savings at all*

# Statement of Financial Activities

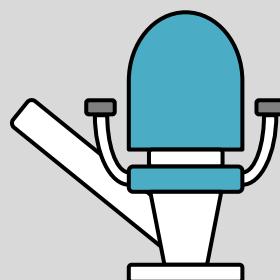
For 2017-2018, here are our statement of financial activities figures:

	31 March 2018	31 March 2019	31 March 2020
<b>Income</b>			
HIA Fees	(434,953)	(438,622)	(383,594)
External Funding (Cambridgeshire County Council, etc.)	(159,188)	(127,490)	(177,990)
Other Income (including landlord & client contributions, & fees from private works)	(10,611)	(42,603)	(40,245)
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>(604,752)</b>	<b>(608,715)</b>	<b>(601,829)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Cost of generating funds	427,413	506,700	554,327
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>427,413</b>	<b>506,700</b>	<b>554,327</b>
<b>Net Incoming/outgoing resources before recognised gains and losses</b>	<b>(177,339)</b>	<b>(102,015)</b>	<b>(47,502)</b>
<b>Trading (Surplus) /Deficit b/f</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(177,339)</b>	<b>(279,354)</b>
<b>Trading (Surplus) /Deficit c/f</b>	<b>(177,339)</b>	<b>(279,354)</b>	<b>(326,856)</b>

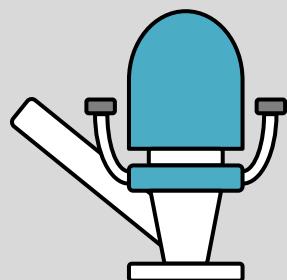
## Last Year We...



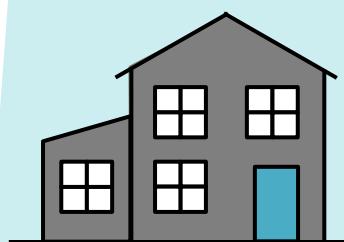
...completed 352 Disabled Facilities Grants across the three districts totalling over £3,307,823



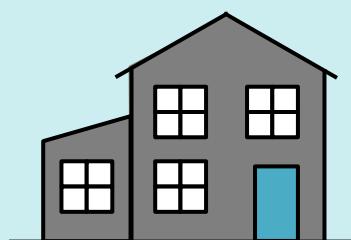
...developed our staff by creating a Trainee Surveyor post and enabled one of our Business Support Assistants to start a business administration diploma



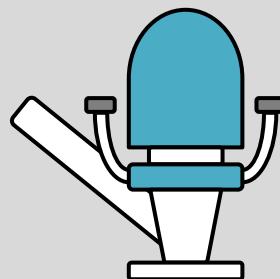
...presented to 9 different agencies in Cambridgeshire promoting the role of Cambs HIA



...tendered a new windows and doors framework to comply with procurement regulations



...hosted and attended some best practice events showcasing how HIA's work



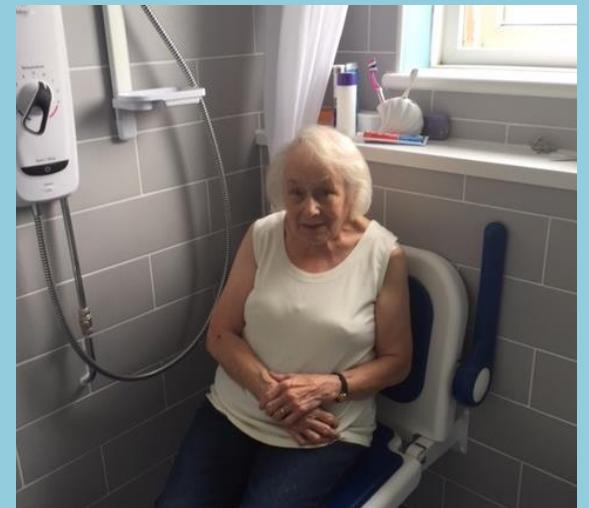
...awarded a new ICT contract to improve our IT systems

# Local Economic Contribution



## £3,307,823

Spent in homes across  
Huntingdonshire, South  
Cambridgeshire and  
Cambridge City.



## 22

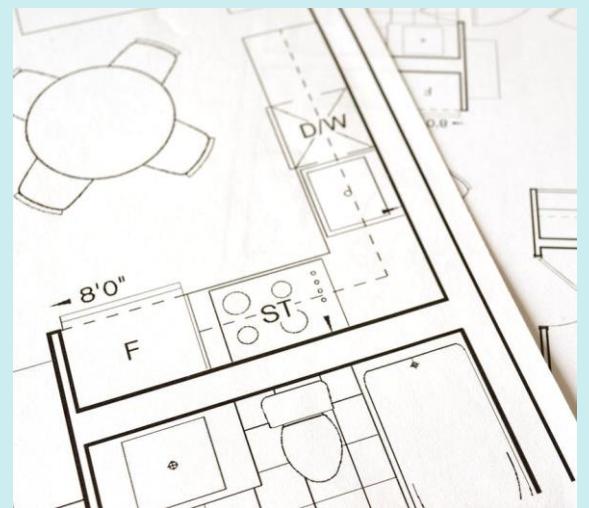
People provided with  
kitchen adaptations  
allowing them access to  
prepare and cook food



The work we do helps  
people remain living safely  
and independently in their  
own homes avoiding  
admissions to hospital or  
residential care homes and  
reduces the amount of care  
they need

## 159

Adaptations completed for  
clients living in Social  
Housing, costing over £1.75  
million



## 14

Helped to tackle fuel  
poverty by installing new  
boilers and insulation

**Cambs Home Improvement Agency** @CambsHIA · 20 Feb

We're very grateful to have received these lovely cards from some of our happy clients in @huntsdc and @SouthCambs

"#Thankyou 🙏 for all your #time, #effort, #patience, #understanding and #care. It is very much #appreciated..."

#DisabledFacilitiesGrant #DisabledAdaptation #Thanks 🙏



We regularly post on social  
media to promote the  
service, other services,  
and to raise awareness of  
disability awareness days

# Collaboration is Key

To enable us to deliver our service we work closely with:



## Approved Contractors

who are trusted and experienced in this field to complete building works on the client's behalf.

## Occupational Therapists

who assess people's need for adaptations and determine how those needs can be addressed within the relevant legislation.



## Charitable Organisations

who help us by providing additional funding where the cost will be above the £30,000 grant limit. Usually needed for complex work including extensions and conversions.



## Local Authority Grants Officers & Private Sector Housing Teams

in each of the three districts to check and approve mandatory and discretionary grants for qualifying people.

# Our Aims for 2020-2021

## Improve Performance by:

- Appoint new building, heating, and windows contracts
- Introduce one new service Level Agreement aimed at speeding up the landlord consent process
- Trialling an OT in the agency to help speed up adaptations

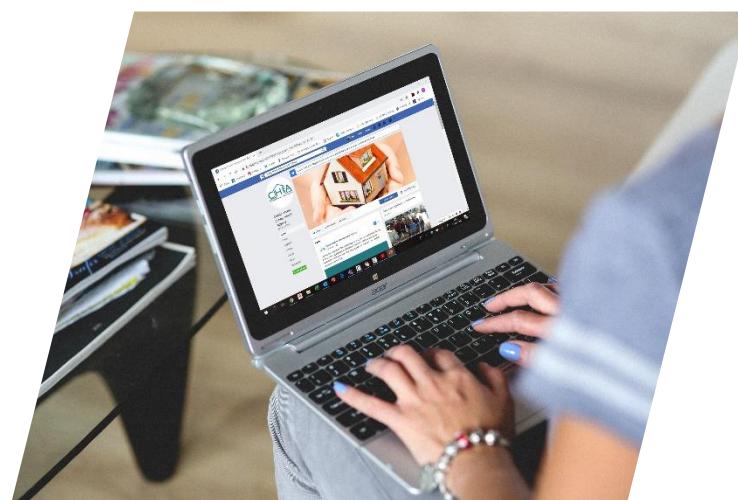


## Improving Customer Service:

- Implementing a new IT system that increases client and OT's updates on the progress of their grants and adaptations
- Updating our website
- Publishing new Customer Service Standards
- Publishing examples of the outcomes of means tests to help people to better understand eligibility

## Increase Awareness and take up of Grants in Cambridge City by:

- More publicity on social media
- More targeted letters to householders
- Greater engagement with other professionals
- More focussed campaigns targeting health inequalities



## Promote Well Being by:

- Working with Environmental Health to address hazards identified as part of Housing Health and Safety Assessments
- Continue targeting grants to help reduce fuel poverty
- Work with COVID 19 support networks to raise awareness of grants for home hazards

# Tell Us What You Think

## Your Feedback

We welcome your comments about our Annual Report and how you think it could be improved.

We also welcome your views about the work of Cambs HIA, now and in the future.

## Contact Information

Cambs HIA  
South Cambs Hall  
Cambourne Business Park  
Cambourne  
Cambridgeshire  
CB23 6EA

T: 01954 713347  
T: 01954 713330  
E: [hia@cambshia.org](mailto:hia@cambshia.org)  
W: [www.cambshia.org](http://www.cambshia.org)

