

Trafford care & repair

Report of Activities

2007/8



Trafford Care & Repair is a Home Improvement Agency, supporting people over the age of 60 to live independently. We provide information, advice and practical support, working with them to make their homes safe, secure, warm and well maintained.

Manchester Care & Repair and Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council worked together to establish the service in 2001. The service has grown significantly from then, with 9 staff now dedicated to supporting older people in their own homes in Trafford - 82% of our clients are over 75 years of age.

This report aims to give you a flavour of the services we offer and information about our successes in 2007/8

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Introduction

As a Home Improvement Agency we recognise that the condition of a person's housing environment can seriously affect their state of mind as well as their physical health. Trafford Care & Repair's objective is to support older and vulnerable people to remain living independently in their own homes.

To this end we offer a portfolio of services ranging from doing small repair jobs around the house to supporting clients needing more extensive work.

Over the last two years we have seen significantly increased performance across all projects but especially in the number of minor adaptations fitted on behalf of Trafford Council. Yet, despite the pressure of continuing growth, in November (2007) we started a new pilot project assisting clients with stairlifts under the Disabled Facilities Grants programme.



In recognition of innovation and good practice, Manchester Care & Repair, of which Trafford Care & Repair is a part, received the 2007 *Agency of the Year – Commended* award, by Foundations, the government-appointed national co-ordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies.

The photograph, taken at the award ceremony at the Houses of Parliament in January 2008 shows, left to right, Bryan Leck (Board Member and treasurer), Graham Brady (MP), Maggie Walker (Chief Exec) and Herbie Yon (Service Director TC&R).

This report sets out some of Trafford Care & Repair's achievements during the year Apr 2007 – Mar 2008, and gives the reader an insight into the types of support that are available. Our services break down naturally into two separate units: Home Repairs Support and Small Works. The former provides support with larger repairs, grants and benefits; the latter provides practical help with small repairs and minor adaptations.

Support with Home Repairs

‘TC&R worked in cooperation with the Trafford Supporting People Team and met all of the standards and action points with diligence and enthusiasm. It is a unique service with high demand providing excellent service to homeowners to ensure that vulnerable adults living independent lives remain in their own home.’

*(SP Review Officer
Mar 08)*

Our Home Repairs Support (HRS) team offers help to older and vulnerable people facing the often daunting task of organising and funding essential repairs. The service is funded mainly by Trafford Supporting People and Housing Renewals money. We also receive a fee for supporting clients in receipt of a Trafford Home Owner Grant.

To benefit for this service enquirers must live in Trafford, be over 60 years of age (or, in exceptional cases, otherwise vulnerable), own their own property, or be in private tenancies.

We give advice on all types of building work including

- windows and doors
- gas and electrical repairs
- energy efficiency measures
- plumbing and heating
- security
- damp problems
- storm damage
- wet or dry rot
- roof repairs etc.

Our caseworkers and/or technical officer will normally visit clients at home to assess the nature and extent of support that is required. Just how much we are involved is down to the individual client. Some clients are able to progress their work with limited support but we do have a large number of clients who require a high level of support over extended periods, sometimes stretching into a couple of years or more.

Having determined what the client wants by way of repairs, we can provide schedules specifying what work is required; give details of contractors from our list of contractors; obtain and check quotations; give advice on planning and building regulations and, when the work is complete, ensure that it is done properly.

We have had a number of complex cases during 2007/8 that have required more input than usual from



In 2006 a lady contacted Trafford Care & Repair for advice. Two of her relatives, both of whom have mental health problems, had been conned out of their life savings. They had spent £18,000 on repairs to their home and the work seemed to be of a poor quality. After involving us she subsequently contacted the police.

Our technical officer visited the property and found that much of the work had been unnecessary and that it was of a very poor standard. For example a new bathroom suite had been incorrectly fitted: the bath was unstable and no overflow pipe or stop valves had been fitted.

The bogus contractors had done work on the electrical system but this had resulted in a small fire under the floor, which fortunately, the clients had been able to extinguish. There was evidence, confirmed by the clients, that the bogus contractors had been drinking on site. We used one of the contractors on our list to rectify the problem and make it safe. By this time the clients had no money but we organized the remedial work using our hardship fund.

In due course, with our help, the clients were able to secure a Home Owner Grant, which has paid for making good the work that had been incorrectly done by the bogus contractor as well as paying for some additional essential repairs. We are glad to report that with just a small amount to be done on the roof, the work is almost complete.

This has been a distressing time for the clients. The only comfort is that we have been able to help put right the damage and that (on this occasion) the bogus contractor has been successfully prosecuted and imprisoned.

the caseworkers and technical officer. In this context complexity refers to either the individual's complex personal circumstances or the nature of the work being undertaken. An example of the former could be where a client needs help to clear out the property before we are able to assess what repairs are needed. An example of the latter could be the intricacies and high cost of dealing with subsidence.

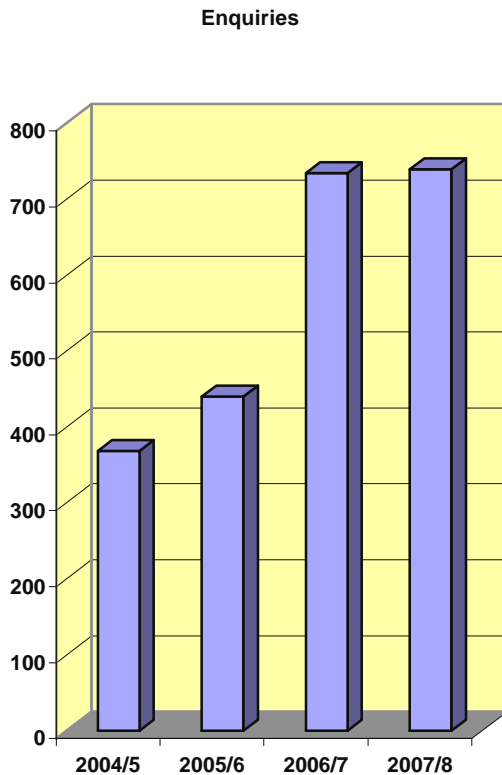
The majority of HRS casework is grant-aided, and tends to be more drawn-out and complex. Trafford Council has a Home Owner Grant scheme. We help clients to assess whether or not they are likely to qualify for a grant and assist them with the application. We find that clients have difficulty in understanding that the provision of a grant is based on a hierarchy of priorities so that, irrespective of the presenting need (say for a kitchen), health and safety issues like electricity must be considered first.

There are several stages to the grant process so it can take a long time before a grant is approved and the work started. Most clients who have benefited from the scheme have needed our support throughout. Last year we successfully signed off 69 grant-aided cases. Some were commenced earlier than last year, and others that were started in 2007/8, continue.

TC&R's Contractor List

Part of being independent is being able to do things for ourselves yet when it comes to repairing our homes most of us have so little knowledge of building works that we have to rely on the integrity of contractors. Thankfully most contractors can be trusted to carry out a good job at a reasonable cost but sadly it is not uncommon for people, especially those who are older and vulnerable, to become victim to unscrupulous, or bogus, tradesmen.

To combat this, and to give clients the confidence to organise their own repairs, we maintain a list of contractors whose credentials we have checked. The contractors do not work for us: they have agreed to be on our list and for their names to be passed to enquirers. Individuals contact us about specific jobs and we provide them with details of contractors from our list so that they can make their own arrangements.



Last year we reported a significant increase in the use of this free service, which puts a lot of pressure on our admin: answering enquiries and sending out information packs. We have now employed an admin assistant to help cope with the increased demand.

We encourage clients to give feedback on the contractors they have used and this helps to ensure that those contractors who remain on the list are reliable and that their work is of a good standard. Complaints are investigated and, if appropriate, contractors will be removed from the list.

All contractors employed by clients to do work in connection with our other repairs support services (such as grant-aided work) will have their work inspected by our technical of-

ficer before the work is signed off. This provides an on-going quality measure for many of the contractors on our list.

On the few occasions when something goes wrong and a client is dissatisfied with the contractor we will usually offer to liaise with the contractor on their behalf to try and sort out the problem amicably.

Clients:

‘Thank you for your help. I feel you do a very good service which gives older people confidence to employ contractors’

‘I was widowed two years ago and with having no experience with tradesmen its very reassuring to me that I can ring and ask for help’.

‘As far as we’re concerned, the service we received is excellent. Thank you to everyone involved.’

How do contractors get on, and stay on, TC&R’s Contractor List?

- Clients can recommend contractors they have used; contractors can apply direct; or we can invite applications.
- We review the list periodically taking into account feedback from clients.
- In the case of a serious complaint we will conduct an investigation and, if appropriate, remove the contractor from the list

What are the requirements?

- Contractors complete an application pack and attend an informal induction interview to discuss our procedures and expectations. They are asked to indicate if they make a call out charge and also if VAT is chargeable. They tell us the types of work they are able to do and areas in which they work.
- Contractors must supply proof of all trade qualifications (E.g. CORGI, NICEIC and FENSA)
- They must also provide evidence that they are properly insured and that their insurance certificates are up-to-date.
- They complete a Health & Safety questionnaire to show an awareness of, and compliance with, current legislation.
- Contractors must show that they understand the needs of older and vulnerable people in a diverse community.
- They undertake a number of commitments. For example advising clients of any unforeseen work with costs and gaining their authorisation before proceeding.
- Acceptance on to our list is subject to two satisfactory references from former customers.

Support for people from BME communities



Funding from the Big Lottery (from 2003) was crucial to our plans for reaching people in areas where there are large concentrations of BME groups, in particular Old Trafford and Firswood. As mentioned in last year's report, this source of funding came to an end during 2007/8 and we wish to thank the Big Lottery for its financial support. We want our services to be accessible to all older and vulnerable people across Trafford and acknowledge that without Big Lottery support we might not have been as successful as we have been in making our services accessible to previously hard-to-reach BME communities.

Our work in these areas continues largely with funding from Supporting People, and this will enable us to build on what we have already achieved. The caseworker remains in post so her understanding of the cultural needs of BME communities and her ability to speak a couple of Asian languages will go on benefiting our clients as well as helping other potential clients to access TC&R services.

Fuel Poverty and Fuel Efficiency



We have received funding from The Scottish Power Energy People Trust to support the work we do in raising awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency, and for assisting clients to maximise their income through appropriately applying for welfare benefits.

As part of this project we also distribute (Trafford-wide) free energy efficient light bulbs and power-down units, courtesy of EON. If our handymen are carrying out work under one of the handy person type projects, they will also fit an energy saving bulb free of charge.

Ms L came to us because her boiler was in imminent danger of breaking down. She was extremely anxious about the impact this would have on her elderly disabled mother who lives with her. She had already received a Home Owner Grant so this was out of the question; neither did she qualify for a Warm Front Grant. Eventually, after pursuing several different options we persuaded her energy supplier to provide the money for a new boiler.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

In November 2007 we piloted a new project.

The Council had a long waiting list of people who had been assessed by an occupational therapist as being in need of a stairlift and who are hoping that they qualified for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

The Disabled Facilities Grant is means tested so, just like the Home Owner Grant there is a fairly lengthy application form to complete. Acting as the client's agent, our case-workers visit clients and help them to fill in the application form and assemble any supporting documentation, which is then sent to the Council for a provisional assessment. The Council run a means test and inform the client of what, if any, contribution they need to make towards the purchase and installation of the stairlift. Some fail to qualify for a grant or feel that their contribution is too much – in such cases the client will either make their own arrangements or choose not to have the equipment.

If, following the means test, the client wishes to go ahead and formally apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant, our technical officer will visit their home to check whether installing a stairlift is feasible. If it is, we ask stairlift suppliers to tender for each job. If the grant is approved a contractor is asked to fit the stairlift and we check that it has been correctly installed and is working properly.

'This year the Council aims to work in partnership with Trafford Care and Repair and Housing Associations to ensure that disabled people are aware of what they are entitled to'



We have found that the whole DFG process can take several months, which is much longer than we had envisaged when we first took it on, but if our involvement can help disabled people to get their equipment more quickly, then we feel that the extra work is worthwhile.

The pilot has only involved stairlifts but we have indicated a willingness to consider other types of work under the DFG programme.

Help with small repairs around the home

There is a growing demand for our handyperson service. Government publications such as *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society* (2008) show how our service is not only in line with government strategy but is something that older people themselves view as being an important factor in independent living.

Financing handyperson services remains a challenge but we are encouraged that the Government is making such services one of its priorities.

This year Trafford Care and Repair made a successful bid to Supporting People to part-fund the handyperson service and this has helped us maintain previous levels of output. It is still a subsidised service with clients being asked to pay £15 (inclusive of VAT) plus the cost of materials but this is well below what they could expect to pay a tradesman, assuming that they could get someone to come out for a small job in the first place.



In last year's report we noted that rising demand for minor adaptations forced us to temporarily suspend the handyperson service for short periods throughout the year and this situation carried on into April and May 2007. With Supporting People funding from July 07 we were able to supplement our workforce by using a small contractor for some of the work and this made further suspensions unnecessary - the waiting list and times have also shrunk to acceptable levels.

“The service was excellent and I felt confident with the two gentlemen that did the work. This was a job that needed doing but we were unable to climb ladders. Congratulations for a service well provided.”

Feedback from our clients shows that they rate the handyperson service very highly and that they would like the service to be more widely advertised so that other older people can benefit too ‘from such great service’. We share the same aspiration: we want to develop the service so that it is readily available to all older people across Trafford. In order to do this we need to build capacity and we are currently looking at various models that might help us to achieve this objective in a way that is sustainable whilst remaining affordable to those on lower incomes.

Helping people with mobility problems

We run two projects (Safe at Home and FAST) that deliver minor adaptations on behalf of Trafford Council. The projects differ only in the type of equipment fitted but both are designed to help people to remain living in their own homes. We fit a variety of grab rails, key safes and furniture raisers.

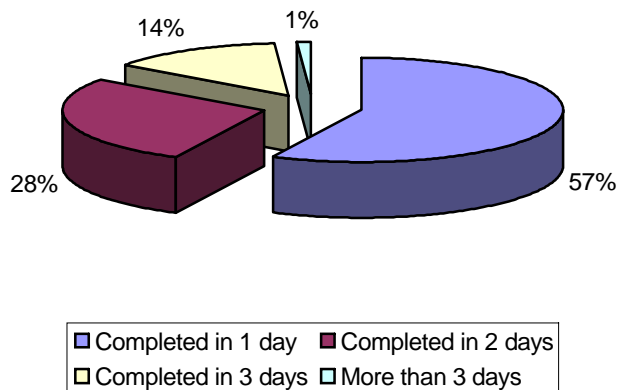
The projects can usually be broken down into three categories.

Hospital discharge: This service is for patients who are ready to come home from hospital but who cannot be discharged until certain aids, as determined by an occupational therapist or acute nurse, are in place. Timely hospital discharge is crucial in reducing bed blocking or the need for one statutory body to charge another for unnecessary delays. The cost of providing minor adaptations is minuscule compared with the cost of someone remaining in hospital.

Intermediate care: This refers to older or vulnerable people who, with the right equipment installed, can be cared for in their own home rather than be admitted to hospital or a care home. The cost of providing minor adaptations is minimal compared with the potentially high costs of residential care.

At risk: The fitting of minor adaptations makes the home environment safer for those considered at risk of falling. Fitting minor adaptations is an effective way of reducing the risk of falling and thereby preventing avoidable suffering. When compared with the huge costs of hospital treatment and convalescence, a minor adaptations programme is cost effective and efficient.

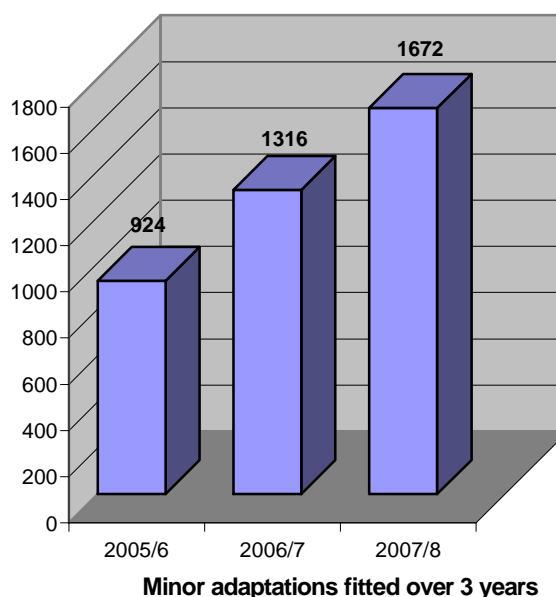
Referrals for the minor adaptation service are usually made following an assessment by an Occupational Therapist. These referrals are then fed through the Council's system to ourselves, at which point we are given three working days to complete Safe at Home and FAST jobs.



Our staff, admin and handymen, have worked hard to keep up with demand. 57% of referrals are completed within just one working day. Where jobs have taken more than 3 days it is due entirely to our workmen not being able to gain access to the clients' property.

How many people have benefited from the minor adaptation work?

The number of referrals for minor adaptations (Safe at Home and FAST) has risen by 80% over a three-year period. In 2007/8 we completed 1672 jobs compared with 924 in 2005/6. As the population gets older the demand for this type of service can only increase. We expect to continue delivering these projects throughout the next financial year, 2008/9.



ADAPTATION SERVICES
TRAFFORD COUNCIL.
REF. NO.

2nd. April. 08

Dear Sir,

I wish to thank you for your kindness and prompt action in dealing with our problem.

May I congratulate you on your cheerful & efficient staff, it was a pleasure to meet them.

My husband is benefitting greatly from the equipment you have supplied.

Kindest Regards.

Client satisfaction

In addition to our own client satisfaction surveys, the Council also solicits feedback from minor adaptations clients.

This letter was sent to Trafford Council. The 'cheerful and efficient staff' refers to Trafford Care & Repair handymen and is typical of feedback received from clients using the minor adaptations and Handyperson services.

We seek feedback from all our clients usually through a client satisfaction questionnaire and send copies of the results to all respondents who have indicated that they would like to receive it. In January 2008 we held a user event at which clients could talk about their experiences of using our services and get to know more about what is on offer.

We are pleased that all three Trafford MPs have shown an interest in our organisation and the work that we do for the people of Trafford. In December 2007 we had a visit from Paul Goggins followed in February 2008 by Beverly Hughes (pictured below with most of our staff). Graham Brady visited us in June 2008.



(In the photograph, taken during Beverly Hughes' visit, from left to right, are: Bud, Herbie, Caroline, Sophie, Ray, Beverley (MP), Vinny, Yvonne and Ian.)

"Trafford Care and Repair is a great service for local people whether they're getting small repairs done or being supported through major changes to renovate their homes. I'm not surprised they received an award because it is a thoroughly efficient but very caring service."
(Beverly Hughes MP)

Our Staff

Caroline Brown	-	Caseworker
Sophie Mohammed	-	Caseworker
Audrey Foley	-	Admin officer – Small Works Services
Yvonne Lengden	-	Admin officer – Home Repairs Support
Bud Marston	-	Admin assistant
Ian Angus	-	Handyperson
Vinny Fahey	-	Handyperson
Ray Flynn	-	Technical Officer
Herbie Yon	-	Service Director (TC&R)

Our Management

Trafford Care & Repair is part of Manchester Care & Repair Ltd, a local not-for-profit organisation which is one of England's largest home improvement agencies. Manchester Care & Repair Ltd has delivered housing related support services across Manchester for 17 years, and in Trafford for 7 years. The organisation is directed by a voluntary management board, and managed by its Chief Executive. The Service Director (TC&R) is responsible for delivering services within the borough of Trafford.

This report only covers Trafford. For information about the whole organisation visit our website www.careandrepair-manchester.org.uk

MC&R's Board of 9 people use their skills and experience in support of the organisation's development. The Board meets 6 – 7 times per year. We want our Board to reflect the diversity of the areas in which we work so if you are looking for an opportunity to serve on the board of a well-established dynamic organisation we would encourage you to contact us. We have identified a particular need for business and enterprise, financial, HR, legal and PR skills but we would also welcome other relevant skills and experience. If you have never served on a Board before, that's OK – we offer training in Board responsibilities and associated skills.

If you are interested then please send a brief CV to Maggie Walker, Chief Exec, MC&R, Unit 14, Empress Business Centre, 380 Chester Road, Manchester M16 9EA. You will be invited to an exploratory discussion and will be given a short induction before deciding whether or not you want your name to be put forward for the full responsibilities of Board membership.

Manchester Care & Repair Ltd is an Industrial and Provident Society with charitable status. Registered Office: Unit 14, Empress Building, 380 Chester Road, Manchester, M16 9EA Registered number 28333R VAT Registration No 900 1476 68

HCY Jul 2008