

APPENDIX 1: LANCASTER HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY (HIA)

Affordable Warmth Improvement Programme

1. Overview

- 1.1. The Affordable Warmth Improvement Programme will be utilised to undertake improvements to enhance the thermal efficiency of properties in the Lancaster district. This will enable elderly or disabled residents to remain safe, warm and independent in their own homes. It is a last resort form of property enhancement where all other sources of improvement and funding have been considered and will compliment the existing range of HIA services.
- 1.2. The measures provided through the Programme will be considered appropriate for enhancing a vulnerable resident's home with the aim of improving affordable warmth, preventing fuel poverty and reducing the number of deaths that are due to vulnerable residents living in cold housing.

2. Application

- 2.1. Property improvements provided through the Programme will be considered following an assessment by the HIA Caseworker and Housing Technician.
- 2.2. Referrals for assessment by the HIA will be made in the normal manner through a network of local partners or by the client direct. The HIA already has in place a well established referral process.
- 2.3. All HIA enquiries are visited by a Caseworker who undertakes an initial assessment of the clients needs, including a financial assessment, completion of any relevant application paperwork and verification of the client's age and receipt of qualifying benefits. If appropriate the case would then be forwarded to the HIA Housing Technician to determine the extent of any works required to the property.
- 2.4. At this stage the Caseworker and Housing Technician will work together to determine the most appropriate course of action available to assist the client to meet their individual needs. This may result in one of a number of solutions including applications for charitable assistance towards the cost of the work, a referral to the HIA's Handyperson Service or advice on re-housing.
- 2.5. If the improvements provided through the Affordable Warmth Improvement Programme are deemed the only or most appropriate form of assistance available to assist the applicant and they constitute capital expenditure as advised by Financial Services the Housing Technician will prepare schedules of work and assist the client to seek estimates from Safe Trader Approved contractors. Once a minimum of two reasonable estimates have been obtained a formal written grant approval is issued to the applicant who will then be responsible for appointing the lowest priced contractor. The amount of assistance will be based upon the reasonable cost of carrying out the necessary works based on the lowest estimate received less any amount the applicant is considered able to pay.
- 2.6. On completion of the work and receipt of an invoice the Housing Technician will visit to ensure the works have been completed satisfactorily. The grant applicant must also be satisfied with the finished works. Once the contractor

has completed any snagging work the grant is paid direct by the council to the contractor.

- 2.7. In order to maximise the number of clients that can be assisted with the limited funds available, the HIA will also give consideration, as an alternative to the provision of a grant, to purchasing the materials required and completing the work in-house through the HIA's existing delivery mechanisms. This will be decided on a case by case basis with approval of the HIA Manager and Financial Services and will take into account, the ability of the HIA to complete the work, current workload, capitalisation and VAT requirements and the potential savings to be made from completing the work in-house.

3. Eligibility

- 3.1. To be eligible for the Affordable Warmth Improvement Programme an applicant must be an owner-occupier, or a private tenant with responsibility to carry out the necessary works. They must generally be aged 60 or over, or disabled, and must always be in receipt of a means tested benefit with savings less than £6,000.

4. Approvals and payments

- 4.1. The HIA will provide all applicants benefiting from the Affordable Warmth Improvement Programme with a formal written approval. No work must begin until written confirmation of the assistance approved has been issued and received.