

NEWCASTLE NEW DEAL FOR COMMUNITIES  
HEALTH FOCUS GROUP

# HANDYPERSON SCHEME: FEASIBILITY AND DEVELOPMENT STUDY

January 2004

Gill Davidson  
Lyn Dodds  
Suzanne Powell



## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to all those people and organisations that provided information or gave their views for this research. In particular, the research team would like to thank Newcastle New Deal for Communities (NDC) Health Focus Group and Positive 3<sup>rd</sup> Age Group, and residents of the NDC area who took part in the study.

Thanks also to consultants and researchers working on similar or related studies who contributed to the research process and shared their findings, including: Judith Green (evaluation of the NDC Independence Project, 2003); Peter Fletcher Associates ('That Little Bit of Help', 2003); Paul Singh from the Newcastle NDC BME Housing Research Project (2003-2004); and West End Befrienders.

## CONTENTS

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Review of UK Handyman Schemes.....	2
2.1.	Tasks covered by Handyman schemes.....	2
2.2.	Cost to client.....	3
2.3.	Role of Handyman.....	3
2.4.	Lessons learned .....	4
3.	Similar and related schemes serving the NDC area .....	5
3.1.	Care in the home .....	5
3.2.	Independent living support .....	5
3.3.	Energy efficiency and security .....	6
3.4.	Gardening and outdoor work .....	7
3.5.	Painting and decorating.....	8
3.6.	Home safety .....	8
3.7.	Larger jobs around the home.....	9
3.8.	Jobs covered by landlords .....	9
3.9.	Other sources of help .....	10
3.10.	Previous schemes.....	11
3.11.	Planned future initiatives .....	11
4.	Consultation for the proposed Handyman Scheme .....	12
4.1.	Tasks.....	12
4.2.	Beneficiaries .....	14
4.3.	Cost to client.....	15
4.4.	Staff and volunteers.....	16
4.5.	Training .....	17
4.6.	Demand .....	18
4.7.	Security .....	19
4.8.	Links to other agencies.....	20
4.9.	Promoting the Scheme .....	21
4.10.	Sustainability.....	21
4.11.	Other issues.....	22
5.	Health and safety.....	24
5.1.	Protecting workers.....	24
5.2.	Protecting service users .....	24
6.	A proposed model for the Handyman Scheme .....	25
6.1.	Size of scheme .....	25
6.2.	Staff and volunteers.....	25
6.3.	Tasks undertaken .....	26
6.4.	Tools and equipment.....	26
6.5.	Cost to clients .....	27
6.6.	Training .....	28
6.7.	Health and Safety .....	28

6.8.	Security .....	29
6.9.	Premises .....	29
6.10.	Promoting the Scheme .....	29
6.11.	Links to other agencies .....	30
6.12.	Budget .....	30
6.13.	Information management .....	31
6.14.	Sustainability .....	32
6.15.	Possibilities for development.....	33
7.	Other research findings and recommendations .....	33

APPENDICES

## 1. Introduction

New Deal for Communities (Newcastle) Limited is part of a national ten-year New Deal for Communities (NDC) regeneration initiative, which aims to achieve renewal in 39 neighbourhoods across England. The local NDC scheme is worth £55 million and based in the West End of Newcastle. It focuses on a number of different themes: education; jobs and business; health; crime and community safety; housing and the environment; and young people. Focus groups have been set up to address each theme.

The task of the Health Focus Group is to implement projects to improve healthy living by providing accessible and effective education and activities for all sections of the community; and to improve the culture, quality and accessibility of services and facilities to improve the health of residents. The Positive 3<sup>rd</sup> Age Group is a sub-group of the Health Focus Group, with a remit to focus specifically on health issues affecting older people.

The Positive 3<sup>rd</sup> Age Group wishes to develop a Handyperson Scheme for people who belong to vulnerable groups. It is anticipated that such a scheme would lead to improvements in home safety and reduce the number of household accidents – and therefore the number of Accident and Emergency hospital admissions - occurring in the area.

Sustainable Cities Research Institute was asked to carry out research to explore the feasibility of the proposed scheme, identify the range of services to be provided, and propose a model for developing the scheme. The research process took place from June to December 2003. It involved:

1. A review of fifteen existing Handyperson schemes across the UK, to provide examples of good practice and lessons learned (see appendix 1 for the full list of schemes reviewed);
2. A review of the local area and current provision of similar and related services;
3. Interviews and meetings with 41 representatives of organisations either providing similar services locally, or working with vulnerable groups in the NDC area (a full list of those who took part in interviews is included as appendix 2);
4. Consultation with 110 local residents belonging to vulnerable groups, using Participatory Appraisal methods (appendix 3 gives a profile of those who took part);
5. The views of approximately 300 other residents - including over 200 people of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) origin - were obtained via contact with other local researchers, who kindly agreed to consult people about the proposed Handyperson Scheme during their research projects.

The following pages contain a summary of the research findings and recommendations for the development of the Newcastle NDC Handyperson Scheme.

## 2. Review of UK Handyman Schemes

The following section provides an overview of the range and scope of Handyman schemes across the UK and demand for their services, highlighting key issues and best practice. Having approached 17 schemes, the following information is based on the 15 that responded (see Appendix 1).

### 2.1. Tasks covered by Handyman schemes

A large number of tasks were identified as being carried out by Handyman (HP) schemes throughout the UK. Listed below are all the repairs and tasks handled by the schemes (although not all schemes do all repairs/tasks):

- ◆ Replacing light bulbs
- ◆ Hanging doors
- ◆ Hanging curtains
- ◆ Fitting window panes
- ◆ Fitting flooring
- ◆ Putting up shelves
- ◆ Small repairs to fencing
- ◆ Hanging pictures
- ◆ Replacing tap washers
- ◆ Changing fuses
- ◆ Cleaning guttering
- ◆ Repairing/replacing locks
- ◆ Fitting spy holes
- ◆ Minor plumbing
- ◆ Clearing snow
- ◆ Minor plaster patching
- ◆ Unblocking sinks
- ◆ Tiling small areas of bathroom/kitchen
- ◆ Installing smoke alarms/carbon monoxide detectors
- ◆ Fitting handrails/grab rails
- ◆ Moving small pieces of furniture
- ◆ Eliminating trip hazards e.g. tack down loose carpet
- ◆ Providing stairgates
- ◆ Central heating repairs
- ◆ Minor electrical repairs
- ◆ Safe disposal of out of date medicines
- ◆ Small repairs to paving
- ◆ Trimming hedges, small amount of weeding
- ◆ Fitting draught excluders
- ◆ Putting up security lights
- ◆ Providing advice on energy efficiency measures
- ◆ Assembling flat pack furniture

Consultation with Co-ordinators suggests HP schemes are responding to a definite need within each community; one Co-ordinator commented, “...a Handyman scheme is what everybody wants...” (Age Concern Berkshire), and as another Co-ordinator explains, “... once you begin to deliver it, it will just take off.” (Mid Devon). All Co-ordinators described the need for and success of their HP scheme, yet they also expressed a desperate need for a service to cover gardening and decorating; of the 15 schemes, only two offered to undertake simple gardening (weeding, lawn-cutting) and three offered decorating (plastering, tiling, painting), both with an emphasis on the time taken to complete such tasks. The problems accompanying providing such services through a HP scheme were acknowledged; these included finding it difficult to find qualified workers and the necessary tools to complete jobs, needing a van to transport equipment, time restraints, effect of the weather, and jobs queuing up.

Nevertheless, a number of schemes were pursuing an effective method of delivery for gardening and decorating services in response to high demand expressed by clients; for example, Durham Handy Van scheme is collecting data from clients, via its evaluation and monitoring process, to provide evidence there is a genuine need in the community for gardening and decorating services. The Co-ordinator also hopes to compile a list of reliable contractors for clients wanting larger work to be completed (as already undertaken by Age Concern Leominster), thus reducing clients' concerns regarding bogus tradespeople and maintaining a manageable workload for the HP, but this is yet to transpire due to issues of liability. Care and Repair Elmbridge currently provides gardening and decorating services via a separate scheme, employing two volunteers to complete the tasks, whilst Caithness HP suggested a similar arrangement whereby volunteers could be employed to provide a gardening service to their clients.

## 2.2. Cost to client

Of 15 schemes, 13 gave data regarding the cost of the scheme to the client. 12 schemes charge the client for the cost of materials used to complete a task (most schemes supply small items free of charge, e.g. screws, nails etc) and of these, two schemes ask for a donation if the client is unable to pay full costs. Two of the 13 schemes also requested the client covers the travel expenses of the HP. Four schemes charged the client for the cost of labour; of these, three were at a reduced cost/free if the client was in receipt of qualifying benefits.

The issue of cost was a sensitive one; some Co-ordinators felt asking for a monetary donation reduced the pressure on clients to cover the full cost of the repairs, yet minimized the stigma of a free-of-charge service. Contradictory views did arise when discussing the cost to clients, varying between a totally free HP service to attract clients, and a service charging for materials and labour so as not to offend or stigmatize clients. It appears each scheme has set the cost of the service to suit the community it serves. Overall, if clients are charged for labour, it is no more than £8 an hour, depending on income (£10 an hour for electric work), and the client is usually quoted the cost of materials before repairs occur. Mid Devon HP scheme has increased its costs to the client as a result of demand for the service and an expansion in workforce to meet this demand.

## 2.3. Role of Handyperson

The majority of schemes employ paid staff and have a volunteer base, and the degree of skills required by the staff varies. Volunteers at Lochaber HP scheme have practical skills, are DIY enthusiasts or retired tradespeople; at Westhill, volunteers need no qualifications, just common sense and experience of household tasks; the HP at Mid Devon has been trained to install carbon monoxide detectors; Leominster's HP is a qualified electrician; staff at Lochalsh and Skye have previous building/DIY experience and are trained in Health and Safety, energy efficiency, and can give grant and benefit advice to clients; the HP at Berkshire's scheme is trained to fit the necessary equipment to clients' homes in order for them to be discharged from hospital. Although skills in household repairs and DIY are preferred, three schemes specifically focus on the 'people' skills demonstrated by project staff and volunteers: as one Co-ordinator explained, *"Some people need personal time too, not just the job (repairs) doing"* (Lochaber), whilst volunteers at North Tyneside HP scheme *"...need to have a pleasant*

*manner and an awareness of the needs of the elderly*". The quality of the volunteer base at North Tyneside HP scheme is very important to its Co-ordinator; he explains:

*"You need to get the right sort of volunteer, they must be people-oriented and know how to engage with the elderly. We like to employ retired school teachers, fire fighters or Council workers who have had experience working with the public."*

*"The Handyperson is like a mini Social Worker. A tradesman would be in and out then hand them a whacking great bill. Our way, the HP goes in, chats to the client, does the work and anything extra which is requested, leaves and it generally costs nothing."* (Age Concern Berkshire)

This Co-ordinator believed the calibre of the employees was crucial, and the quality of work and their people skills were vital to the whole service. Overall, the HP should talk with the client, befriend them and gain their trust, as this is viewed as part of the HP service.

## **2.4. Lessons learned**

When asked to impart information specifically regarding the lessons learned since the onset of their scheme, the responses from Co-ordinators fit into two general themes: the workload of the HP scheme and the skills base of the project staff and volunteers. The general advice concerning employing a Co-ordinator for the scheme is to ensure they have practical as well as managerial/administrative skills; DIY knowledge is seen as 'essential' for the Coordinator (Westhill):

*"...make sure the Co-ordinator...is not solely in an administrative role but out doing the practical work as well. This ensures a better understanding and feel as to how the project is progressing and being received by the community."* (Lochalsh and Skye)

North Tyneside's Co-ordinator is an experienced tradesperson, taking volunteers out on repair jobs with him to give on-the-job training, thereby building capacity and maintaining contact with the community.

One of the recurring issues when starting up an HP scheme is to decide on the nature of the work to be offered to clients and the time limit for each task. The basic message is *"start as you mean to go on"*. One Co-ordinator felt his HP was so skilled he had to take on larger, more complex jobs to fulfill the HP, but this backfired when later on in the scheme these tasks were downsized in both time and complexity due to an increase in demand for the HP; clients heard, via word of mouth, of the work the HP offered and expected the same level of service as others had experienced, when this was no longer on offer the clients were unhappy with the situation. The Co-ordinator at Mid Devon agreed with this sentiment: *"Make sure you under-do it as opposed to overdo it when you first set up the scheme...If you begin by offering a large number of services that cannot be fulfilled then reduce them, clients will be disappointed."* The number of tasks undertaken and the length of time required to complete them is also important; advice included limiting the amount of time spent on one job (City Homecare Staffordshire), avoid taking on too big a job (Lochalsh HP, Age Concern Leominster), and try to contain the scheme so as not to overload the HP with work whilst building up the volunteer base (Age Concern Berkshire).

### **3. Similar and related schemes serving the NDC area**

This section reviews other schemes and projects that operate in the NDC area and provide similar or related services to Handyperson Schemes. The aim is to give a summary of the types of services vulnerable people are already able to access, to ensure that the proposed Handyperson Scheme will be genuinely additional rather than duplicating current services.

#### **3.1. Care in the home**

##### **3.1.1. Age Concern Care at Home Service**

Age Concern Newcastle provides a home care service for dependent people of all ages in the community. This service is provided under contract on behalf of Newcastle Social Services, who fund the scheme. Care is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is charged at a rate of £7.50 per hour (not all users are eligible to pay this, depending on their circumstances). The main tasks offered are personal care and some limited shopping. Recent changes mean that the service now does much less than it used to in the way of household tasks.

##### **3.1.2. West Gate Home Help Service**

This is an ILM project operated by Community Service Volunteers (CSV), and funded by NDC and the European Social Fund (ESF). It works both within the NDC area and in a wider postcode area in the West End. It employs long-term unemployed people as trainees for 40 weeks, offering courses such as personal development, basic food hygiene, first aid, child protection, equal opportunities, and TOPSS (Training Of Personnel in Social Services). As well as undergoing training, the trainees also provide a low-cost home help service (£5.50 an hour). The service includes cleaning, laundry, running errands, changing light bulbs, cleaning windows and some light gardening. The service is available to all, although priority is given to people over 65, and those with disabilities or health problems (e.g. long- or short-term rehabilitation for cardiac patients, women with post-natal depression, and people with mental health problems).

#### **3.2. Independent living support**

##### **3.2.1. Disability North Independent Living Service**

Gives people advice and support about purchasing special equipment to help them live independently. People who approach the service are assessed by a therapist, and given advice on what equipment would best suit their needs, so that they can go and buy it (the service displays a few items but does not supply much). The service also puts people in touch with appropriate charities that may be able to help them to buy equipment. Grants from Social Services are available to some people. The service is often used by people who have seen an Occupational Therapist, but have been told they will have to wait for equipment they need (due to waiting lists), so they decide to go ahead and buy it themselves. The service receives funding from a charity and the Local Authority.

### **3.2.2. Independence Project**

This project provides small aids and equipment such as tap turners, jar openers and bath mats to help people carry out everyday tasks, allowing them to remain independent and reduce the risk of household accidents. The project also runs a 'bottle in the fridge' scheme – providing vulnerable people with the means to alert the emergency services to medical information and next of kin in the case of an emergency. It has also begun work on a scheme to provide carbon monoxide detectors in the homes of vulnerable elderly people. The project receives clients through self-referral as well as professional referrals. All of its services are free. It is very popular and is over-subscribed. NDC and Newcastle West PCT fund the scheme, which covers an area including and slightly beyond the NDC area (covering all of Elswick and Benwell wards).

### **3.2.3. Community Resource Team**

This is an intermediate care team covering the west of Newcastle, which receives multidisciplinary referrals to make home visits to vulnerable people, usually when they have suffered a fall or lost their confidence for some other reason. The aim is to help people to remain independent and keep them out of hospital. The team includes nursing staff, a physiotherapist, a consultant geriatrician, and a consultant psychiatric geriatrician. It provides a range of services based on the patient's needs, including physiotherapy, provision of living aids and equipment, ensuring patients' living environments are safe, and making sure they are receiving the appropriate care from other agencies, e.g. medical care and social services. Team members also carry out some 'Handyperson' tasks on occasion, such as changing light bulbs and tap washers, and nailing down carpets. However, this is not strictly within their remit.

## **3.3. Energy efficiency and security**

There are a number of existing schemes in Newcastle that provide a range of services to help people make sure that their homes are energy efficient and safe. Most of these organisations are run on a not-for-profit basis. Costs to the user are usually low, and most organisations will help people to find out whether they are eligible for a grant to have the work done for free or at a reduced cost. Some of the organisations operating this kind of service in Newcastle and the NDC area are described briefly below.

### **3.3.1. Keeping Newcastle Warm**

Provides cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, heating, draught proofing, security devices (mortice locks for doors, window locks, spyholes, security chains, smoke alarms), and energy audits. It is a recognised Network Installer under the Government's Home Energy Efficiency Scheme and a partner with Northern Electric & Gas Energy Efficiency Standards of Performance.

### **3.3.2. Housing Investment Strategy and Affordable Warmth**

NDC is funding home improvements to improve the condition of the local housing stock, and make homes more energy efficient and secure. Initiatives so far have included the installation of new doors and double-glazing in Beech Grove, Kenilworth and Warrington Roads and

Ashfield Close. Affordable Warmth has so far provided free loft insulation for 1,300 privately owned homes in the NDC area.

### **3.3.3. N.E.S.T. MAKERS**

N.E.S.T.MAKERS Ltd (Neighbourhood Energy Services Team) is an independent company set up by the Eaga Partnership and Scottish Power to combat fuel poverty. It uses a neighbourhood-based approach, with local advisers visiting households to offer free advice on heating efficiency. It also refers eligible households for the Government's new Home Energy Efficiency Schemes (HEES and HEES Plus). Grants can be used for insulation, draught proofing, more efficient heating systems and appliances. Households also receive free energy efficient light bulbs and energy advice.

### **3.3.4. Warm Front and the Eaga Partnership**

Warm Front is a Government-funded initiative managed by the Eaga Partnership in the North East of England. It provides grants of up to £2,000 per household, and employs contractors to carry out work to make homes warmer and more energy efficient. This may include insulation, draught proofing, energy efficiency advice, heating systems and appliances, and security measures in high crime areas. The scheme is aimed mainly at private tenants and owner-occupiers who are on a low income and receive certain benefits, although social tenants may also be eligible for grants. Grants are available to householders of a variety of ages and circumstances.

### **3.3.5. WinterAction**

Gives impartial advice on keeping warm in winter and reducing fuel bills. It offers free home visits to people aged 60 years and over, with the aim of helping to reduce cold-related illness in Newcastle.

## **3.4. Gardening and outdoor work**

Council and other tenancy agreements usually state that it is the tenant's responsibility to keep their garden and outdoor areas in good order, although the garden should be in a reasonable condition at the start of the tenancy. Council Estate Officers and Housing Assistants sometimes carry out garden inspections, and will inform tenants if they need to tidy their gardens up a bit.

### **3.4.1. Community Action Training Initiative (CATI)**

CATI is a community gardening initiative managed by Cityworks to maintain the gardens of elderly and disabled people. There is currently one squad (5 trainees) working in the Walker and Byker areas only. People can use the service by contacting their local housing office. They are put on a short waiting list and the team will go and do their garden when they next visit the area. The squad has fairly small capacity, and usually handles about 5 referrals a month from each of the local housing offices in the area. This is a Modern Apprenticeship scheme, with trainees working towards an NVQ in Intermediate Horticulture. Plans to roll out the scheme across the City – including the NDC area - were included in Newcastle City Council's Housing Strategy 2002-2005.

### **3.4.2. Terraces in Bloom**

This project has been responsible for planting and maintaining hanging baskets, which have been hung in some of the terraced streets in northern parts of the NDC area.

### **3.5. Painting and decorating**

No schemes providing painting and decorating services are currently known to operate in the area. However, there are private firms who will provide this service.

### **3.6. Home safety**

#### **3.6.1. Safetyworks**

Safetyworks is an interactive safety centre in the West End of Newcastle where people are given training on how to keep safe in a variety of different situations. Training is available on road safety, fire safety, first aid and emergency responses, safety in the home, trading standards, and various other areas. Safetyworks provides training for various groups, including young children and elderly people (e.g. on how to walk up stairs safely and make sure the home environment does not contain hazards). It has also provided training for people working with elderly and vulnerable people (e.g. Home Helps) to equip them to deal with the various situations they may encounter in their work.

#### **3.6.2. Fire safety initiatives**

Safe and Sound is a Newcastle City Council initiative, that does home fire safety checks and installs smoke detectors. The Arson Task Force, a joint initiative between the Police, the Fire Brigade and local councils, runs a variety of initiatives promoting fire safety. Safetyworks also runs courses on fire safety.

#### **3.6.3. NDC Family Safety Initiative**

The Family Safety Project is a support and educational project for families living in the NDC area. It complements and builds on an existing Sure Start Home Safety Equipment scheme. The project has two main purposes:

- 1) To standardise information about safety in the home and first aid to new parents and parents of children under the age of 5;
- 2) To reduce serious accidental injuries to children under 5 years.

The project has recruited and trained local people as Safety Advisors to target accident prevention and make home visits. They provide information and advice about preventing accidents in relation to the age and stages of development of children of families in West Gate NDC area. The project was approved in June 2001 and will be funded for 4 years.

### **3.7. Larger jobs around the home**

#### **3.7.1. Anchor Staying Put**

Anchor Staying Put (ASP) works across Newcastle, helping owner-occupiers and some private tenants with repairs, improvements and adaptations to their property. Most clients are aged over 60. It carries out full property assessments to check which jobs need done, and financial checks to ensure that people are getting the benefits they are entitled to, help them with any benefits claims, and look at funding the work that needs done. Newcastle City Council provides £250,000 each year, which ASP administers on its behalf to fund repairs and improvements. Other sources of funding include charities, mortgages, loans, and payment plans, and ASP will help the client to look into these options. The main jobs handled include roof repairs and replacements, windows and doors, damp treatment, and electrical work. ASP tends not to bother with jobs of less than £100 total cost, as it is not worth making funding applications for such small jobs. ASP maintains its own list of reliable tradesmen, and will put out all jobs to tender to two or three of these tradesmen, asking them to submit quotes to do the work. It provides support for householders while the work is being done, and may arrange alternative accommodation for people. It also makes regular checks on the standard of work, and then a final inspection to ensure the client is happy before paying for it. Newcastle and Gateshead's Anchor Staying Put schemes are set to merge on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004.

#### **3.7.2. Adaptations**

There are a number of organisations that will provide specialist equipment and make adaptations to people's homes to help them in their daily lives. This kind of work is mainly done where people are physically disabled or suffer long-term limiting illness. For instance, Newcastle City Council's Social Services Department offers this service.

### **3.8. Jobs covered by landlords**

The 1999 NDC Delivery Plan shows that the area consists of 53.9% Local Authority housing, 14.1% owner-occupied, 15.5% rented out by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), and 16.5% private rented or other types of tenure. Obviously owner-occupiers are responsible for any repairs and work done in their own homes; below is a summary of the type and extent of the help tenants can expect from their landlords.

#### **3.8.1. Newcastle City Council**

The Council's Community Housing Service will handle most major repairs for Council tenants. When a new tenant moves into a Council property, it is usually decorated for them or a decoration allowance is paid to them so they can do it themselves. However, tenants are usually responsible for doing certain jobs themselves: interior decorating; replacing door handles; easing and adjusting doors; replacing plugs and chains in baths and sinks; replacing toilet seats and lids; replacing letter boxes; replacing wall and floor tiles; minor repairs to kitchen cupboards and drawers; replacing bulbs in gas or electric fires. In cases where tenants are elderly or disabled, the Council may agree to help with these jobs. Cityworks handles the repairs and maintenance work and will do all kinds of repairs on a paid basis. However, it is a very expensive service (although you can pay by instalments). An Arms

Length Management Organisation called Your Homes Newcastle will take over responsibility for Newcastle's Council housing stock in 2004; it is expected to carry out a programme of improvements such as fitting new doors and windows (this work has already begun in some parts of the NDC area).

### **3.8.2. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)**

There are a number of RSLs who own properties in the NDC area. These include the Anchor Trust, Byker Bridge Housing Association, Enterprise V, Home Housing, Newcastle and Whitley, and Two Castles. Most RSLs offer a similar level of home maintenance to that offered by the Local Authority.

### **3.8.3. Private landlords**

For most short leases, private landlords are responsible under the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 for maintaining the structure and exterior of the home, including drains, gutters and external pipes; supply of water, gas and electricity; and heating and water heating installations. The Local Government and Housing Act (1989) sets down the minimum standards that a dwelling house must meet in order to be deemed fit for human habitation. In addition, the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 states that gas pipes and fittings must be of a required safety standard and must be checked annually. Finally, the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 (as amended 1989 & 1993) specify that beds, pillows, sofas, and other upholstered articles must have passed certain fire resistance standards. Responsibility for other jobs depends on the terms of the tenancy agreement.

### **3.8.4. Private Rented Project**

This NDC-funded project supports private tenants and landlords in the NDC area. Its work includes mediation between tenants and landlords, for instance if properties need repair jobs done and there is a dispute about who is responsible for the repairs. It also keeps a register of tradesmen that have been recommended by other local landlords, to help private landlords to manage repairs. There is a discount scheme for landlords if they join the Inner West Landlords Association. This has been running for about 5 years, and it costs £35 a year to be a member. Landlords can get 10-30% discount on things like electrical locks, window repairs, furniture, and accountancy services. These services are for landlords only – not tenants.

## **3.9. Other sources of help**

### **3.9.1. Time Exchange**

This is a time bank based in the Arthur's Hill part of the NDC area. Members can offer their skills and time to do jobs for others, and in so doing can 'bank' their time (1 hour's work = 1 credit) then use their credits when they need others to help them. All skills are considered to be of equal value, and skills scans are carried out to ascertain what skills each member has. Even physically infirm and vulnerable people can usually offer a skill, e.g. befriending. Time Exchange has 110 individual members and 22 organisation members. Time Exchange also has a 'community pot' to which people can pay in credits, which are then donated to local community and voluntary projects

### **3.9.2. Informal help**

A number of people living in or around the area will do odd jobs around the home for people, on an informal basis. This is often done on a cash-in-hand basis, with the 'odd jobbers' being on benefits or in low-paid work, and doing the work for a bit of extra money. There were also some reports of young people keeping elderly and housebound people's gardens tidy or doing small jobs in exchange for pocket money. A number of elderly and vulnerable people reported that they receive help around the home from family, friends and neighbours. This kind of help is usually given free of charge, and may cover anything from housework and shopping, to repairs and adaptations.

### **3.10. Previous schemes**

In the past, the Manpower Services Commission, training schemes run by NACRO involving young offenders, and a voluntary scheme called 'You can do it' would handle small odd jobs concerning home maintenance, gardening and decorating for elderly and vulnerable people in the NDC area. However, these schemes were no longer running when this research was being undertaken in 2003.

A previous Council scheme, operating in a similar way to the CATI gardening scheme, provided painting and decorating services, with squads covering the West End (mainly the Newburn and West Denton areas) and East End. The scheme ended in March 2003 when funding ran out.

### **3.11. Planned future initiatives**

As part of its Older People's Housing Strategy, Newcastle City Council is planning a City-wide Handyperson scheme, which will be run by Anchor Staying Put. Newcastle and Gateshead's Anchor Staying Put schemes are set to merge on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004. One of the first tasks for the new Manager, when appointed, will be to develop complementary services such as a Handyperson Scheme, home-from-hospital care, gardening and decorating schemes, and home safety and energy efficiency work.

There are also plans to roll out Newcastle City Council's Cityworks CATI gardening service across the City over the next year or so.

## 4. Consultation for the proposed Handy person Scheme

This section summarises the findings from interviews with representatives of organisations working with vulnerable people in the NDC area, the PA consultation process with NDC residents, and the range of findings passed on to the research team by other researchers.

### 4.1. Tasks

People were asked which tasks elderly and vulnerable people in the area needed help with. A huge range of responses was received. The most popular requests included:

- ◆ **Housework:** recent changes in the Care at Home service mean that there is now little support available to help people manage household tasks. A lot of requests were received for housework, from everyday tasks and cleaning (e.g. cooking, washing up, vacuuming, and dusting) to more occasional jobs like cleaning out cupboards and cookers, hanging curtains and nets, turning mattresses, changing loose covers, washing down paintwork, and washing inside windows.
- ◆ **Household maintenance:** including fairly small jobs that do not require specialist skills or equipment, but need to be done by an able-bodied person. Examples included changing light bulbs and smoke alarm batteries, fitting or changing electric plugs and fuses, and moving furniture. People also thought it would be a good idea to do basic safety checks in people's homes, to make sure that there are no trailing wires, loose carpets, rugs, or general clutter lying around that could cause a fall, and check for other potential hazards.
- ◆ **Small repairs:** repair work on fixtures and fittings that are worn out or broken, such as: repairing kitchen cupboards and drawers; replacing tap washers; replacing curtain rails; unblocking sinks, pipes and drains; small sewing jobs; and tacking down carpets. Most of these jobs would require some experience – though not necessarily expert skills - and basic tools or equipment.
- ◆ **Fitting small devices** to improve safety, energy efficiency or security, such as draught excluders, window and door locks, spy holes, and smoke alarms. Again, these tasks would require basic tools and some experience.
- ◆ **More difficult jobs** that may require specialist skills, experience, and equipment, such as: replacing broken window panes; replacing floor and wall tiles; putting up shelves; fitting safety rails; patching up plasterwork; screwing electrical sockets that are hanging off walls into place; replacing frayed flexes and wires; other electrical work; plumbing in washing machines; and fixing leaky pipes and taps.
- ◆ **Gardening:** there is seasonal demand for gardening work from Easter onwards each year. All types of residents appear to want help with gardening, not just the elderly and vulnerable. Demand appears to be low in northern parts of the NDC area, which is mainly terraced housing with yards and small paved front areas. In areas where people have proper gardens, like Cruddas Park, demand is greater.
- ◆ **Painting and decorating:** people recognised that this was not something that would necessarily make people's homes safer, but they felt that having a pleasant home environment was important to people's mental health and well being.

These were the types of task that were brought up most frequently. A range of other jobs was also mentioned (some only once or twice). Most of these are listed below, to give an idea of the range of tasks that people requested help with. This list is not exhaustive and it is quite likely that Scheme users would request to have other jobs done.

- ◆ Changing bulb in electric fire
- ◆ Mending pan handle
- ◆ Mending Hoover
- ◆ Fitting a new toilet seat
- ◆ Painting the back doorstep
- ◆ Fitting gramophone needle
- ◆ Putting screws in
- ◆ Measuring windows for curtains
- ◆ Spot cleaning rugs and carpets
- ◆ Ironing
- ◆ Anything that needs stepladders
- ◆ A chat and cup of tea
- ◆ Taking people out for walks, shopping, visits, doctor and hospital appointments
- ◆ Putting away clothes
- ◆ Visits in residential homes/hospitals
- ◆ Small repairs to car or bike
- ◆ Improving the safety of stairs
- ◆ Damp proofing
- ◆ Sweeping and swilling paths
- ◆ Clearing snow from steps and paths
- ◆ Building small outside walls
- ◆ Laundry/taking washing to launderette
- ◆ Shopping
- ◆ Collecting pension
- ◆ Fetching prescription from chemist
- ◆ Changing library books
- ◆ Opening tins/cans/bottles/jars
- ◆ Hanging out washing
- ◆ Changing summer to winter duvets
- ◆ Cooking/preparing Sunday lunch
- ◆ Putting drops in dog's eyes/pet care/walking the dog
- ◆ Putting up the Christmas tree
- ◆ Babysitting/keeping an eye on kids
- ◆ Small building and carpentry jobs
- ◆ Paying bills
- ◆ Helping people to use aids to daily living

The table below gives an idea of the level of demand for the different types of job, by showing the number of requests received for the most popular task types during the PA consultation with residents.

<b>Task type</b>	<b>Number of requests</b>	<b>Task type</b>	<b>Number of requests</b>
Everyday housework	37	More difficult jobs/repairs	19
Occasional housework	69	Gardening	22
Household maintenance	37	Painting and decorating	31
Small repairs	19	Fitting safety/security devices	12

Another area for which there was high demand was personal care. People mentioned a wide range of different needs, such as dropping in for a chat and a cup of tea, running errands and buying shopping, taking people out for doctors' appointments and visits, and cooking meals. It is unlikely that the Handyperson Scheme would be able to provide such a level of care, but the research findings indicate that there is unmet need for this type of support.

A number of people also wanted recommendations for trustworthy tradesmen, such as plumbers, heating engineers, and builders. Although some agencies already keep lists of tradesmen, people expressed concern that not enough is done to check that listed tradesmen are reliable. Respondents wanted tradesmen's registers that were based on police checks, references, work standards assessments, and user satisfaction surveys.

A few requests were made for support for vulnerable people; it was thought that this could probably be done on a voluntary basis. For instance, it was suggested that people would welcome having someone to sit with them and keep them company while they were having work done in their home. Another suggestion was that retired tradesmen could offer support by making sure householders understand exactly what work is being done and why, talking to the tradesmen, and checking they are doing the job well, to reassure people that they are not being ripped off.

Linked to the issue of what tasks the Scheme should provide, some people also felt that it could offer basic training so that people could do their own repairs and small jobs in future. This could be quite informal, e.g. if the Handy person is doing a job, s/he could talk the householder through it so that they can manage by themselves next time. This was thought to be a good idea where people are not necessarily physically unable to do a job, but are lacking in knowledge or skills (e.g. asylum seekers and people setting up home for the first time). People thought the Scheme could help such people become more independent, rather than just doing the work for them.

A further issue related to people not having the right equipment to do particular jobs, and several respondents suggested that some kind of tool hire scheme or tool library would be useful. Finally, people also mentioned the possibility that some able-bodied people may simply need an extra pair of hands to help them with a particular job (e.g. moving furniture).

## 4.2. Beneficiaries

The following types of people were mentioned as potential beneficiaries of the Handy person service:

- ◆ **Elderly people**, especially those who have lived in a property for a long time, which may now be in poor repair due to general neglect.
- ◆ **People with physical disabilities**, such as mobility problems, impaired sight and hearing.
- ◆ **People with mental disabilities** who may be physically fit but lack knowledge and skills.
- ◆ **People with long-term limiting illness.**
- ◆ **Single parents, people who are newly separated, and those who live alone**, who may be unused to managing the household alone and find certain jobs a struggle, or who may simply need a helping hand (e.g. if a task requires two people, such as moving furniture).
- ◆ **Carers** looking after vulnerable people.
- ◆ **Asylum seekers and refugees** and other people new to an area. Such people are vulnerable because they lack knowledge of the local area, do not know many people, and may have poor language skills.

- ◆ **People setting up home for the first time**, who may lack the knowledge, skills or experience to handle small jobs and repairs, but could probably manage with advice or support from the Scheme.
- ◆ **People affected by drugs or alcohol.**

A small number of people thought that the Scheme should be available to everybody, arguing that it may create resentment if some people could benefit from the Scheme while others could not. Others mentioned particular priority groups such as families, young parents, owner-occupiers and private renters.

Several respondents mentioned the difficulty of prioritising different types of potential service beneficiary. Most respondents thought it was most important that the service was available to elderly people, disabled people, and those with long-term health problems. Single parents were seen as the next most important group. However, some people also thought it was important to prioritise the service in terms of the types of jobs that people need done. For instance, if someone is living in a home that is genuinely dangerous or unfit, their need must take priority over people whose needs are relatively minor. Another important factor was whether people have access to any other sources of help, such as family, friends and neighbours, or whether they can afford to pay a tradesman to do work for them. It was argued that people who have such options must be viewed as a lower priority than those who have nowhere else to turn.

### 4.3. Cost to client

- ◆ Some respondents thought that people would be willing and able to pay for a Handyman service, while others disagreed. It was pointed out a number of times that charging for the Scheme would probably make people more reluctant to use it, and might lead to low service take-up.
- ◆ The view was also expressed that people tend not to be willing to pay for any NDC-related services, as they feel that it should all be free, with costs covered by the NDC pot.
- ◆ Some people thought it would be possible to charge for certain types of job (e.g. non-essential jobs like gardening and decorating), while making other jobs free. An alternative idea was to charge for any work done for people living outside the NDC area, while making all services free to people living in the area. However, many people thought that this idea was unfair. It could also create problems if seeking mainstream funding for the Scheme.
- ◆ The most popular idea was for the work to be either free or low cost. Although the best solution might be to make the service free, it was thought that some people would be too proud to use a free service, but happier to use it at a small charge. Some respondents also said people would value the service more if they had to pay for it.
- ◆ Although there was some support for some kind of 'ability-to-pay' model for deciding whether different people should have to pay for the service or not, respondents were against the idea of using any type of means-testing process. This was thought to be overly complicated, time-consuming and bureaucratic, and unfair to those 'borderline cases' that just miss out on receiving a free service.

- ◆ Most people were happy with the idea of paying for or making a contribution towards the cost of materials. To avoid worry or embarrassment for Scheme users, it was thought that the best idea was to give people a guide figure as to what a suitable donation would be. They could then make their own minds up how much (if anything) they wished to give. Suggested amounts ranged from 50p-£20 for up to half a day's help, with respondents being most in favour of a low rate of 50p-£3, followed by amounts up to £5.
- ◆ Other suggestions included having a fixed charge for particular jobs (although this could become very complicated depending on the range of jobs being handled), paying a charge depending on the size of the job and how long it took, and charging an hourly rate. People thought it was important that there was no call-out fee, and that people knew in advance of the job being done exactly how much they would be asked to pay.
- ◆ The idea of introducing a membership scheme was put to NDC residents. Some people thought that this could work (an annual fee of £10 was suggested). However, it was suggested that this idea could be introduced at a later stage once the Scheme has been established.
- ◆ Several respondents stressed that the most important thing regarding price was *'for the Scheme to start as it means to go on'*. They were not happy with the idea of making the service free at first then suddenly introducing charges, or raising prices at some future date.
- ◆ Small jobs and repairs are often unexpected, and people on a low income find it difficult to budget for them. It was suggested that if the Scheme were to charge for work being done, it should develop a flexible payment scheme so that people can pay smaller amounts over a longer period of time. This would be particularly important for larger and more expensive jobs.

#### 4.4. Staff and volunteers

##### 4.4.1. Staff

- ◆ People thought that having the right workers was crucial to the success of the Scheme. The general feeling was that having the skills to do complicated jobs was secondary, and that it was more important to have workers with some *'nous'* – who can see what needs to be done and get on with it.
- ◆ As well as having practical skills and *'knowing what they were doing'*, people thought the Handyperson(s) should be able to get on with service users and recognise their wider needs, and build relationships with other service providers.
- ◆ NDC residents mentioned a range of qualities that they thought the Handyperson should have. These included: competent, trustworthy, genuine, friendly and presentable. People did not want a Handyperson who was lazy, noisy, a smoker, an ex-convict, unreliable or lacking in skills.
- ◆ Some NDC residents said that they would prefer a more mature Handyperson (e.g. 50+ years), and a few were wary about younger people (i.e. twenties or below) doing the job. Some thought the job would suit a retired person. Two female respondents said they would feel more comfortable if the Handyperson was a woman, and others thought people should be able to choose the gender and age of the Handyperson working for them. This

was thought to be particularly important for domestic violence victims, who may feel threatened by a male Handyman. However, most people thought that age and gender were less important than skills and other qualities.

- ◆ Although it was not thought to be important to have a Handyman who was highly skilled (and people pointed out that it would be unusual to find someone with a wide range of different skills), if the Handyman was to carry out skilled work, s/he must have the appropriate and up-to-date qualifications (e.g. s/he must be Corgi registered).
- ◆ Some people said that they would prefer the Handyman to be somebody local. However, others pointed out that it has proved difficult to recruit local people to work for NDC.

#### 4.4.2. Volunteers

- ◆ Some respondents thought that the right volunteer(s) could be a real asset to the Scheme.
- ◆ Organisation reps reported that volunteers are hard to find (and also to keep) in the NDC area, and that the majority of the most active community members are already involved with NDC (e.g. as community reps). One respondent said that *'people in the area prefer to have things done for them'*.
- ◆ It was pointed out that volunteers are often older, retired people, who may not be fit enough to do the work of a Handyman. However, this would depend on the type of task, and there may be many Handyman tasks that such people could do.
- ◆ Concern was expressed that reliance on volunteers would limit the Scheme, as it might mean a lack of continuity if volunteers drop out or move on. Also, it may be difficult for volunteers to handle budgets, monitoring and administration tasks.
- ◆ A number of respondents pointed out that many people living in the NDC area already act as helper/handyman to their friends, family and neighbours. It was felt that the Scheme should try to seek out such people and offer support to them, rather than trying to replace them or leaving them to work in isolation.

#### 4.5. Training

- ◆ West Gate Home Help Service offers its trainees a range of courses such as personal development, basic food hygiene, first aid, child protection, equal opportunities, and TOPSS (Training Of Personnel in Social Services). One respondent pointed out that TOPSS training is soon to become mandatory for people working with communities.
- ◆ Workers may need training to help them gain the confidence to deal with any situations they encounter. For instance Home Help trainees sometimes have problems when going into the homes of people who are mentally ill, and people with drug or alcohol problems may prove to be unpredictable and need sensitive treatment.
- ◆ Other training may have to be provided so workers can manage the range of jobs and repairs needed. Alternatively, the project may need to employ people who can specialise in different areas of work (e.g. who already have the skills, or are willing and able to do specialised training in a particular area).

- ◆ There was concern that the Scheme could quickly get too wrapped up in red tape regarding making sure workers get extensive training, at the expense of helping vulnerable people. In the words of one person, *'we can all make mistakes sometimes, and it is important not to get too bound up with the bureaucracy at the expense of actually getting the jobs done for people'*. It was pointed out that training can be both time-consuming and expensive.

#### 4.6. Demand

- ◆ Organisations working with elderly and vulnerable people say there is a huge demand for a handyman service across the City, and that requests are regularly received for a person or service that will do small jobs around the house. There was a feeling that elderly people can get taken advantage of by some tradesmen, who may ask for large sums of money to do small jobs.
- ◆ Some respondents said that budget cuts have forced Social Services to concentrate its care work towards only those people with very pronounced needs, which means that people in medium or low need groups can miss out on the help they need. This seems to be an important factor causing such people to lose their independence and have to move into alternative accommodation.
- ◆ NDC residents taking part in the PA sessions were asked whether or not they would be likely to use the Handyman Scheme themselves. Around half said they would be unlikely to use it. Some people said they did not need any help, while others already received help from family, friends, or neighbours. A quarter of respondents thought that they would use the Scheme, or else that they knew other people who might want to use it. The remaining respondents were not sure whether or not they would use the Scheme.
- ◆ Respondents from BME communities – particularly Asian women - showed a lot of interest in the proposed Scheme, but wished to know more about how it would work.
- ◆ Some respondents thought there was a stigma attached to admitting that you need help to manage your home, and that people are too proud to ask for help or afraid that they would be a burden. This seems to be most pronounced among older women. For instance, one woman who was very ill and frail was ashamed about enquiring about the Home Help service, in case her neighbours found out.
- ◆ There is likely to be a link between the cost of the service and demand, as shown by the experiences of other initiatives in the NDC area. The Independence Project, whose services are free, has experienced huge demand and is oversubscribed, while West Gate Home Help scheme (which charges £5.50 an hour) has found less demand for its services. However, the view was also expressed that there is a stigma attached to *'accepting charity'*, so demand for the Scheme might actually be lower if it were free.
- ◆ The types of jobs covered by the Scheme may also affect demand (and the Scheme's ability to meet demand). Several respondents thought that because the demand for gardening and decorating work (both time-consuming jobs) is so high, the Scheme should not cover either of these jobs, or else the Handyman(s) may well spend all his/her time gardening and decorating and never have time to tackle other jobs and repairs.

- ◆ Some people felt that there might be a need to put a limit on the number of jobs an individual or household can have done over a specified time period. It was thought that this would help to ensure that the Scheme was reaching a wide cross-section of needy people, rather than doing lots of work for a small handful of residents.

#### 4.7. Security

- ◆ The most common concerns expressed by residents about the Scheme related to security. People were worried about letting strangers into their homes to do jobs or repairs. One person mentioned *'people conning their way into elderly peoples' homes and stealing'*, while another thought the Handyperson might snoop around and look in drawers. Others thought there was a danger that potential users might be suspicious of the Handyperson and chase them away, or conversely that people might be likely to let anyone in their house because they were either so desperate for help or unaware of the risks.
- ◆ Several respondents said that people do not like to be on their own when there is a tradesman working in the house, and that the Scheme could use volunteers to sit with people and keep them company while they are having work done.
- ◆ The NDC Independence Project tries to minimise any anxiety regarding security by making sure staff are introduced to the service users by someone familiar, such as their home help or sheltered housing warden. Respondents thought that this would be an acceptable way of introducing the service, and would minimise potential users' concerns about security.
- ◆ Running police checks on the Handyperson(s) as a condition of employment – and mentioning this on Scheme leaflets and literature so people are aware of it - was also suggested.
- ◆ Other suggestions included using photo ID cards and uniforms, making sure the Handyperson visits by appointment only, and giving an introductory letter to users, including a phone number, so that users can ring the main office and check the Handyperson is genuine. A visible office base was also seen as a positive way of gaining people's trust. It was thought that trust would be built up as the Scheme went on, particularly if people got to know the Handyperson(s).
- ◆ One respondent pointed out that Handyperson Scheme staff also have to make sure that they are safe, and that their equipment, tools, and transport are not in danger of being stolen or tampered with. It was suggested that working in pairs might be a safer option, especially in situations that might be considered risky, and that employing local people as Handypersons may be helpful in reducing risks because they might have better knowledge of the NDC area and people. Other ideas to keep workers safe include carrying mobile phones or personal alarms, and asking them to ring in to the office at specified times of day.
- ◆ One person suggested that training be delivered to the Handyperson(s) regarding appropriate behaviour to use in service users' homes. Advice could also be given on how to deal with unusual situations (e.g. what to do if something happens that the Handyperson is uncomfortable with, and how to work sensitively with users who have mental health or drug/alcohol problems).

#### 4.8. Links to other agencies

- ◆ Most people felt that the Scheme should have close links with other local similar schemes, and that this would provide benefit in two ways: it would enable the Scheme to receive referrals from other initiatives; and also ensure that Scheme users are referred to or told about all of the other services that they could benefit from.
- ◆ It was also suggested that developing and maintaining good links with other local agencies and groups (including voluntary and community groups) could help the scheme to operate better by exploiting local knowledge of who is helping out their neighbours and needs support, which people are in real need of Handy person services, which local people have handy person skills, and whether there are any local tradesmen who are ripping people off.
- ◆ Similar services operating in the NDC area reported that the Search Project, the Independence Project, and the West Gate Home Help Service are particularly good sources of referrals, and that close working with these initiatives would probably be helpful to the Scheme as it is being set up. Representatives of all three projects expressed an interest in promoting the Handy person Scheme and referring their users to it. Others suggested that the Scheme should develop links with schemes like Sure Start and Healthworks.
- ◆ There was a feeling that in some cases, people who work with elderly and vulnerable people – and who may be their only contact with the outside world - do not know enough about the range of available services. It seems that there are a lot of activities going on, and that the picture is ever changing. It was suggested that Scheme staff should make an effort to be aware of other local initiatives so that they can refer people appropriately.
- ◆ Several respondents suggested that the NDC Handy person Scheme should have close links with the Newcastle City Council Handy person Scheme – which is likely to be run by Anchor Staying Put as a joint venture with Newcastle and Gateshead Councils. Representatives of Anchor Staying Put and Newcastle Council were interviewed during this research, and they felt that a close relationship between the respective Handy person Schemes would be a positive thing.
- ◆ While some people felt that close links with the Council and linked agencies would give the Scheme ‘official status’ and ensure that demand and referral rates were high (e.g. by ensuring that the new single assessment process for elderly people refers people in need to the Scheme), others were wary that it would put potential users off.
- ◆ One respondent said that *‘getting your foot in the door’* is the most difficult and time-consuming part of doing housing maintenance and repairs, and that it is worth looking for ways to integrate different types of service (e.g. small repairs, energy efficiency and smoke alarms). People thought that local initiatives like the Handy person Scheme should be jointly co-ordinated in a way that is easiest for residents to understand and use. One suggested that people should have a single contact person to tell about any problems they have, and that this person could then liaise with the appropriate service(s) and arrange any interventions. It was suggested that this could be a neighbourhood or community warden, similar to the Byker Wardens.
- ◆ Several people suggested that the Scheme develops working links with Time Exchange in order to have different types of jobs done for service users, and also to ensure it receives

referrals from those who need to have work done. Representatives from the Time Exchange were interviewed as part of this study. They reported that Time Exchange receives a lot of requests for Handy-person-type work, and that they are interested in developing work in this area, or in working jointly with the Handy-person Scheme.

- ◆ Several people stressed the importance of making sure the Scheme links in with benefit maximisation work done by the Search Project and Age Concern. It was also pointed out that Winteraction has a hardship fund so that it can donate money to people in real need, and that the Scheme should alert people needing work done to the existence of the fund.

#### 4.9. Promoting the Scheme

- ◆ Promoting a project is an important way of ensuring that people know about it and that its services are taken up. Vulnerable people are often also *'hard-to-reach'*, so promotion is a vital element of the overall work of the Scheme. Respondents thought that the most effective way of promoting the Scheme would be for residents to hear about it from their housing wardens, home helps, link workers, or other people that they have regular contact with.
- ◆ Representatives of other projects described the work that they do to promote their schemes, such as visiting community groups, residents' associations and sheltered housing complexes to tell people about the service and what it does. *'Advertising via established schemes'* was seen as a good idea, with those mentioned including Age Concern and NHS information officers.
- ◆ Sitting on the various local committees and steering groups also enables close networking with other local agencies, and helps to make people aware of what the project does. Working closely with other projects and referring service users to other appropriate services can also help to promote the project, and may make other agencies more likely to do the same.
- ◆ People were less keen on the idea of using leaflets and posters to advertise the Scheme, as it was thought that there are already too many leaflets coming through people's doors, and that there are a lot of people who cannot read them anyway (e.g. people with impaired sight, and those who cannot read English). One agency representative suggested that a leaflet drop would probably only yield a 3-6% response rate, which suggests that it is not a very effective method for promoting services. However, it was suggested that Scheme leaflets could be put in the resource packs that some agencies give out to their users.

#### 4.10. Sustainability

- ◆ Concern was expressed about ensuring that the Scheme is sustainable in the long term. A number of people pointed out that while Handy-person Schemes are very useful and do good work, they need funding or other income to enable them to continue to operate. In addition, residents said that they were sick of being consulted about projects that only lasted five minutes anyway
- ◆ It is important to make sure that the Scheme is getting enough clients and doing enough work to make it worthwhile, and to make sure that ongoing funding or income is available.

People thought risks could be minimised by making sure that the Scheme *'started small'* and then was allowed to grow organically as it became established.

- ◆ One way to make sure the Scheme is financially viable would be by charging competitive rates for the work the Scheme does. However, charging high rates would probably mean that fewer people would use the Scheme.
- ◆ Some people thought it would be possible to gradually turn the Scheme into a social enterprise by developing new Scheme activities that bring in an income to fund the Handyperson work. Potential ways to do this include: extending the Scheme beyond the NDC area, and charging high rates for any work carried out in other geographical areas to fund the work within the NDC area; or developing certain activities (e.g. non-essential tasks like gardening and decorating) which the Scheme charges higher rates for.
- ◆ However, there are problems with both approaches. People pointed out that there are vulnerable and poor people living all over the City, so it would be unfair to subsidise work in the NDC area by charging people living in other areas. Alternatively, if the Scheme covered the NDC area only, several people said that few NDC residents are rich enough to afford to pay to have any work done.
- ◆ Some respondents mentioned the possibility of developing the Scheme using an Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) model: employing and supporting trainees to do tasks such as decorating and gardening on a paid basis, as a way of funding other Scheme activities. However, a number of people were against this idea and thought it would cause problems.
- ◆ It is also important to investigate new funding sources for the Scheme from a very early stage. People described seeking project funding as *'an ongoing battle'* and said that it can cause successful projects to fold despite high levels of demand. One respondent said that while NDC is keen to fund new projects, it cannot always be relied upon to grant repeat funding to successful projects. One respondent suggested Northern Rock as a potential funder.
- ◆ A few people thought that while it would be good to have the project mainstream-funded in the long term, it was also unlikely (*'why would the City Council agree to take on projects that they wouldn't provide in the first place?'*). However, it was thought that developing links with the City Council's planned Handyperson Scheme might prove to be a useful route towards mainstreaming.
- ◆ Several people felt that the ultimate aim was to have a City-wide Handyperson Scheme. It was thought that NDC could provide the opportunity for this to happen eventually, by pump priming a 'pilot' scheme in the NDC area, which can later be rolled out across the City.

#### 4.11. Other issues

- ◆ Some respondents suggested that there might be some problems encountered when working with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups. For instance, it was reported that language is a big issue in the NDC area, especially in the northern parts, and that the Scheme may need to use an interpreter at times. There are also cultural issues to be aware of. The West Gate Home Help Service has found that Asian trainees would only agree to work in non-Asian homes, while Chinese ones would only work in Chinese homes. It was thought that there would be little demand for the scheme among Asian

elders, as there appears to be a strong feeling within Asian families that the women should manage to look after their elders without any help.

- ◆ Several people pointed out that the Handyperson(s) might need access to some form of transport to help them travel around the NDC area, especially if they are carrying tools or equipment.
- ◆ Some people thought there might be a problem with the quality of the service. One resident was worried that the Handyperson may turn out to be a 'cowboy'. Others were worried that the Handyperson might prove difficult to get rid of, and thought that it should be made clear that s/he should *'get the job done and go'*.
- ◆ Respondents felt that there should be a central contact point so that it is easy to get in touch with the Scheme.
- ◆ There was concern that the Scheme might be a threat to local small businesses, and could take away their customer base.
- ◆ People also pointed out that the Scheme would need to have public indemnity insurance (although it was thought that NDC must have insurance, and that this may cover the Scheme).

## 5. Health and safety

There are two main types of health and safety risks for the proposed Handyerson Scheme: the possibility that Scheme workers may have accidents or suffer injuries while doing their work; and the possibility that Scheme users (or their families or friends) may be hurt as a result of the work that has been done.

### 5.1. Protecting workers

The following advice comes from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). It is essential to ensure that employees are trained and competent to do their jobs safely and without putting their health at risk, that they are properly supervised and given clear instructions, and they have the right tools, equipment and protective clothing. The main risks facing the Handyerson(s) will be a result of:

1. **The environment they are working in.** Potential hazards include poor lighting, the lack of access/escape routes, wet floors, tripping hazards, and the presence of asbestos.
2. **The type of work they are doing.** Potential hazards include working at a height, using ladders, lifting heavy objects, handling tools and equipment, working with electricity and gas, and handling hazardous substances.

Health and safety issues should be discussed at work so that employees are aware of the potential risks they may face, what precautions they should take to minimise risks, and what to do in the case of an accident.

All businesses that employ staff should have employers' liability compulsory insurance, and should be registered with the HSE. The health and safety law poster (ISBN 0 7176 2493 5) should also be displayed in the workplace.

Further health and safety information can be accessed at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk) or by calling (08701) 545 500. Of particular interest with regard to the Handyerson Scheme are free leaflets such as '*An introduction to health and safety: health and safety in small businesses*' and '*The absolutely essential health and safety toolkit for the smaller construction contractor*'.

### 5.2. Protecting service users

The following advice comes from the Trading Standards Institute. If users of a service are paying for the work being done, then they have a right to expect that it is done with reasonable care and skill, and that any parts that have been fitted are of satisfactory quality and are fit for their purpose. The work must also be done within a reasonable time and for a reasonable charge. If the work causes an accident or personal injury, or causes damage to property, then service users are advised to refer to the Trading Standards Institute for further advice. Further information about trading standards can be accessed at [www.tradingstandards.gov.uk](http://www.tradingstandards.gov.uk) or by calling (0870) 872 9000.

## 6. A proposed model for the Handyperson Scheme

Based on an analysis of the research findings - the review of other UK schemes, study of existing provision in the local area, interviews and meetings with agency representatives, consultation with residents, and consideration of health and safety requirements - the research team proposes the following model for the Handyperson Scheme.

### 6.1. Size of Scheme

1. It is recommended that the Scheme be developed as a small project with only two (FTE) staff members. This will give staff a chance to iron out any problems, assess demand and monitor take-up, and enable the Scheme to grow organically. If it was to start out as a big initiative, then finding extended funding would be more difficult and sustainability harder to ensure.
2. It is suggested that the Scheme be granted NDC funding to cover its staff and running costs for three years in the first instance. This would give the Scheme the chance to become properly established – and address any early problems - before the need to seek continued or alternative funding becomes pressing. It is suggested that the Scheme be viewed as a pilot during this period, and a quarterly monitoring system and six-monthly reviews be introduced from the outset as a risk management measure.

### 6.2. Staff and volunteers

1. It is suggested that the Scheme employs a full-time Co-ordinator and full-time (or full-time equivalent, e.g. 2 x part-time) Handyperson.
2. The Co-ordinator's role would be to handle the budget, develop and oversee monitoring and information management processes, co-ordinate the Handyperson's work schedule, handle requests, referrals and enquiries, promote the Scheme, engage and support volunteers and make funding applications. The Scheme Co-ordinator will preferably have some practical skills and knowledge, so that s/he can go on home visits to meet people and assess their needs (and carry out Handyperson work if appropriate).
3. The Handyperson's role would be to do home visits, make assessments of users' needs, carry out jobs and repairs, maintain tools and equipment, keep records of work carried out, support volunteers, and handle requests, referrals and enquiries.
4. The Handyperson does not necessarily need to be highly skilled or experienced at carrying out small jobs and repairs, although this would be an advantage. However, it is important that the Handyperson has common sense and '*nous*', can see what needs to be done (and can either get on with it themselves or refer it on to the appropriate agency), and has good interpersonal skills. Past experience of working with elderly and/or vulnerable people would be an advantage. Workers should also be physically fit, and need to pass police checks.
5. The Co-ordinator should be appointed first to work on initial Scheme development and promotion. After a lead-in time of 2-3 months, the Handyperson should be appointed.

6. Depending on Scheme take-up, it may be appropriate to employ additional staff at a later date, such as administrative staff and additional Handypersons.
7. The Scheme should aim to complement rather than replace the informal help that is already offered via 'odd jobbers' and voluntary helpers (family, friends and neighbours). Opportunities to work with and offer support to such people should be sought. The Scheme may wish to give priority to local people – particularly those already undertaking Handyperson-type work in the area, whether paid or voluntary – when recruiting Scheme staff.

### **6.3. Tasks undertaken**

1. The research findings show demand for a wide range of different types of tasks (though it is not an exhaustive list, and service users may also request other jobs). It is suggested that the Scheme takes a flexible approach with regard to which tasks it handles, focusing on occasional household tasks, household maintenance, small repairs, and some more difficult jobs.
2. The types of tasks undertaken will also be partly governed by the abilities, experience and confidence of the Handyperson, who should not be expected to carry out any tasks s/he is unsure about managing.
3. A basic safety assessment should also be carried out whenever staff members enter a service user's home, to check for any obvious hazards (e.g. obstacles that might cause someone to trip or fall) and ensure that they are dealt with.
4. There are some tasks that the Scheme should not attempt to handle. The list includes: jobs that are routinely handled by other organisations and could be referred on to them (e.g. personal care and everyday household tasks that are covered by home help services, energy efficiency work, aids to daily living and home adaptations, children's safety equipment, and home security); and larger jobs (e.g. those that would cost over £100 if done by a tradesman).
5. It is also recommended that the Scheme does not carry out gardening or decorating tasks, as these would be likely to be overly time-consuming. However, it may be possible to do small jobs of this kind for users, such as clearing a path or pruning a bush if it is causing a hazard, although this would have to be at the Handyperson's discretion.
6. The study revealed demand for other types of work (e.g. a tradesmen's register, volunteer support for people having work done by tradesmen, a tool library), but it is suggested that the Scheme does not attempt any of these in the first instance, and instead starts by offering a simple Handyperson service.

### **6.4. Tools and equipment**

1. The Handyperson(s) will need a toolkit, and it is suggested that one of his/her first tasks when appointed should be drawing up a list of the basic tools s/he needs (although he or she may prefer to use his/her own tools). This list will partly depend on the type of jobs the Handyperson feels confident about tackling.

2. It will also be useful for Handyperson(s) to carry a range of equipment and materials for carrying out basic tasks. This should include light bulbs, tap washers, batteries, electric plugs and fuses, screws, nails and carpet tacks. It is suggested that service users should be asked to provide materials for any cleaning jobs.
3. A sum should be set aside from the project budget to purchase and maintain tools and other equipment. All such equipment should be bought from traders in the NDC area where possible. It is suggested that only a basic toolkit be assembled at first, as the need for tools may vary depending on the type of tasks the Scheme is asked to handle. Scheme staff should be responsible for tools maintenance and safety checks.
4. Scheme staff may also need a vehicle to enable them to travel around the area doing work, especially if they have a heavy toolkit. It would be desirable to employ a Handyperson who has access to a car or van that s/he can use for work. However, if this is not possible, the Scheme may have to explore other alternatives, such as hiring a car or van for the Scheme's use, using a bicycle or public transport to travel around the area, or appealing for a voluntary 'Handyperson's mate' who has access to a car.
5. Scheme staff may also wish to carry literature and leaflets for the Handyperson Scheme and other local services to give out to service users and agency representatives as appropriate. It may also be helpful to keep a list of useful phone numbers in the main office base (e.g. the Neighbourhood Housing Office, Social Services, and other agencies), so that staff can pass them on to service users as appropriate.

## **6.5. Cost to clients**

1. It is suggested that Scheme users are asked to pay a small fee for the service, although it should be stressed to them that this is a voluntary fee and if they prefer, they can opt to pay a smaller (or larger) amount or have the work done for free.
2. The Scheme should develop a simple pricing structure, based on the size of different jobs and how long they take. For instance, £1-2 for a small job, and £4-5 for tasks that take longer. The upper limit charged should be no more than £10.
3. The Scheme may wish to either incorporate the cost of any materials used into the pricing structure, or else ask users to pay extra for them. Choosing the second option would allow more flexibility, as users may prefer to simply pay for the cost of materials rather than giving the suggested fee.
4. Once the Handyperson has assessed what jobs need to be done in a user's home, he should then explain them to the user and tell them the suggested fee, before he starts work.
5. For larger jobs, users should be given the opportunity to pay in weekly instalments – or given a 'grace period' in which to save up the money - by arrangement with Scheme staff.
6. If the Scheme is successful, it may wish to introduce a membership scheme at a later date so that people pay a monthly or annual fee rather than paying for individual jobs done.

## 6.6. Training

1. The most important initial training requirements are to ensure that staff are aware of: Health and Safety issues; how to behave appropriately in service user's homes and deal with unexpected situations; and how to ensure that their own safety is not at risk. The Scheme may wish to buy in formal training packages to cover these areas, or else it may be more appropriate for the staff team to discuss these issues and how to handle them in a more informal manner. The preferred training methods will depend on staff members' previous experience and confidence levels. Knowledge and confidence in these areas will also grow through experience.
2. The HSE ([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) gives guidance on health and safety matters, and the Suzy Lamplugh Trust ([www.suzylamplugh.org](http://www.suzylamplugh.org)) provides personal safety advice. Safetyworks can provide local training on issues such as dealing with unexpected situations, as well as health and safety matters.
3. Further training can be provided for the Handy person(s) if and when requested or viewed as appropriate. This may include training in first aid, child protection, equal opportunities, personal development, and TOPSS (Training Of Personnel in Social Services). There may be an opportunity to link with other agencies that already provide or access these training packages (e.g. West Gate Home Help Service).
4. Handy person(s) may also wish to receive skills training to enable them to carry out a wider range of tasks confidently, or to update their skills and renew certificates (e.g. Newcastle College offers part-time courses in brickwork, plumbing, woodworking, interior decorating, and other skills for £140-£325). This is likely to depend on the range of demand that the Scheme receives, as well as the skills and interests of the Handy person(s).
5. It is suggested that the Scheme has a training budget so that staff can access appropriate training packages.

## 6.7. Health and Safety

The Scheme can take the following steps to ensure that health and safety risks to staff and service users are minimised:

1. Ensure that the Handy person(s) does not carry out any work unless s/he is confident that s/he has the right skills and equipment to do the job.
2. Make sure that the Handy person explains exactly what work s/he is doing - and why it needs to be done - to the householder before starting any job.
3. Never leave a service user's home in an unsafe state as a result of work that has been done by the Handy person (even if the job is not yet completed).
4. Ask the service user to check all work that is done, to make sure that he or she is happy with it, preferably before he or she pays for the work. If possible, get another staff member (e.g. the Co-ordinator or another Handy person) to check the completed work as well.
5. Make sure that work records are kept showing: what jobs have been done and by whom; the date they were done; any parts that were fitted; how much the user paid for the work; the service user's name and address; and any problems that arose. This will be useful in case any problems arise from jobs that have been done, and also for monitoring purposes.

6. Make it clear in Scheme literature that while the Handyperson(s) are competent, they are not highly qualified (or highly paid) experts in all areas of work.

## **6.8. Security**

1. Ensure that police checks are run on potential Scheme employees as a condition of employment.
2. Scheme staff should be provided with photo ID cards bearing the NDC logo and the office telephone number so that users are able to ring up and check that the Handyperson is genuine.
3. Providing the Handyperson(s) with some kind of uniform – an overall or boilersuit – bearing the NDC logo would make them more identifiable, and would also help protect their clothing.
4. Staff could be given mobile phones so that they are contactable at all times, and asked to ring or call into the office at pre-arranged times each day (e.g. first thing in the morning and just before home time).
5. Try to ensure that Scheme staff are personally introduced to service users by somebody known to them. This could be managed through the process of promoting the Scheme, for instance by asking sheltered housing wardens and home helps for referrals.
6. A standard introductory letter could be prepared for people using the Scheme for the first time. This could explain what the Scheme does and why, how much it charges, and who the staff members are. Using staff photos on all Scheme literature would be an additional security measure for service users.

## **6.9. Premises**

The Scheme should have an office base in the NDC area. This will enable it to develop and maintain close links with partner agencies, and will also mean it is close to the customer base. The Scheme may also generate some passing trade if the office is in a main thoroughfare or shopping area.

## **6.10. Promoting the Scheme**

It is suggested that the Scheme Co-ordinator takes responsibility for promoting the Scheme, using the following methods:

1. Arranging visits to community groups, luncheon groups, daycare services, residents' associations and sheltered housing complexes to tell NDC residents about the service and what it does.
2. Networking with other agencies and individuals working with vulnerable people in the area, either by contacting them individually, or through involvement with inter-agency groups and committees. Some suggested contacts include: Search Project; NDC Independence Project; West Gate Home Help Service; Private Rented Project; Age Concern, Better Government for Older People; Elders' Councils; Community Resource Team; NDC Community Reps; Community Co-ordinators and Community Development Workers; Housing Wardens; and Link Workers.

3. Having posters and leaflets printed explaining what the Scheme does. Posters could be displayed in prominent places in the NDC area (e.g. Cruddas Park Centre and Shopping Centre, CHAT Shop, Roshni, Search Project, post offices and doctors' surgeries). Although door-to-door leaflet drops may not be very effective, Scheme leaflets could by arrangement be put in the resource packs that some agencies give out to their users, distributed to other agencies working with vulnerable people, and left in public places as listed above.
4. The Scheme Co-ordinator should also make an effort to ensure that s/he has up-to-date information about the range of other services available for vulnerable people in the NDC area (e.g. through networking and inter-agency links). This will be useful in making contacts with other agencies, as well as in making appropriate referrals.

### **6.11. Links to other agencies**

1. As well as ensuring that the Scheme develops close links with the range of other agencies working with vulnerable people to ensure that potential users are aware of the service (see above), it is also suggested that the Scheme could develop operational partnerships with similar local services.
2. Newcastle and Gateshead Councils are planning to develop a joint Handyperson Scheme over the next year, which is likely to be run by Anchor Staying Put. For various reasons, it may be preferred that the NDC Handyperson Scheme remains financially separate from this venture (e.g. concern has been raised that NDC residents would not wish to use a Newcastle Council-backed Scheme, and the two schemes would cover different geographical areas, which could cause complications). However, it is likely that close partnership working could benefit both Schemes, and would be likely to be helpful in making referrals, recruiting and training staff, sharing good practice and lessons learned, and increasing opportunities for mainstreaming the NDC Scheme. (Kathleen Saunder, Anchor Staying Put, telephone: 274 2643; Anne Todd, Newcastle City Council, telephone: 232 8520, ext. 25854).
3. It will prove useful for the Scheme to develop close working links with local services that provide very similar services (whether it is within their remit to do so or not), such as the West Gate Home Help Scheme and the Community Resource Team. Scheme staff would then be able to form agreements with staff of such projects as to exactly which types of task each will handle, thereby providing a more efficient service to residents.
4. It is also suggested that the Scheme may wish to approach the Time Exchange with a view to developing joint working practices. Such a partnership may be particularly useful if, for instance, a need arises to have a job done that the Handyperson(s) is unable to manage without specialist skills. It may also prove useful in helping users to access help with non-Scheme tasks, such as gardening and decorating. The Scheme may also be able to benefit from the Time Exchange's 'community pot' of credits, as other local projects have done. (Martin Brennan, Time Exchange, telephone: 245 6663)

### **6.12. Budget**

Without knowing how much NDC funding will be awarded to the Handyperson Scheme, what salary scales are used by NDC projects, and what level of in-kind support (if any) would be available from NDC, it is impossible to make any definite recommendations with regard to the

project's budget. However, it is suggested that the Scheme budget will have to allow for the following types of cost:

1. Recruitment and salary costs for a full-time Scheme Co-ordinator and (FTE) Handyperson, plus on costs (NI and pensions).
2. Staff training.
3. Office premises, including rental costs, lighting and heating.
4. Tools and equipment, including office equipment, mobile phones and protective clothing.
5. Travel costs, including transport hire or car user allowance.
6. Promotional materials, stationery and postage.
7. Occasional interpreting services as required (it is suggested that interpreting services are procured locally, e.g. First Step, Newcastle Interpreting Service. Interpreting should be budgeted for at around £30 per hour.)
8. Insurance costs if not covered by NDC insurance.
9. Evaluation costs.

It is not expected that the income from Scheme user payments will prove to be a significant contribution to the Scheme budget. Working at full capacity, it might be expected that the Handyperson could realistically manage up to 4 or 5 small jobs (or 1-2 larger jobs) in one working day, giving a maximum potential daily income of £4-10 plus materials costs. This will probably be less during the early stages of the Scheme when take-up is likely to be low. However, it is suggested that income accrued through user payments be used for the purchase of additional equipment and tools.

### **6.13. Information management**

1. The Scheme Co-ordinator should develop an information management system, preferably using an electronic database such as Excel or Access. The kinds of information that should be stored include service users' names, addresses and contact details; what work they have had done by the Scheme (including when it was done, what they paid and what parts were fitted); any special needs users have (e.g. interpreters, health and mobility needs, housing issues); whether users have been referred to other agencies; and what requests for work the Scheme receives. Ideally, the information should be capable of being sorted (e.g. according to the different categories of information collected) for monitoring purposes.
2. Both the Scheme Co-ordinator and the Handyperson(s) should help to maintain the system by recording what they do on a daily basis.
3. Keeping these records will serve several purposes: it will form a record of what the Scheme has achieved for monitoring and review purposes; it will be helpful in planning future initiatives or developing the Scheme; and it may prove useful if any problems arise from jobs that have been done.
4. Outcomes and outputs for the Scheme should be agreed with NDC Management and Admin staff. The main Scheme outcome is to reduce the number of household accidents –

and therefore the number of Accident and Emergency hospital admissions - occurring in the NDC area among elderly and vulnerable residents. Data about this for the NDC area should be collected throughout the life of the Scheme. It is suggested that the following additional outputs may be considered: number of home visits to NDC residents; number of improvements to the safety of dwellings; number of elderly/vulnerable people benefiting; number of residents receiving training; and number of jobs created (FTE). The outputs chosen should be capable of being collected via the Scheme's information management systems.

5. Ideally the Scheme should be closely monitored - probably on a quarterly basis - and also reviewed every six months. Six-monthly reviews would give Scheme staff and steering group a chance to assess issues such as Scheme take-up and whether demand is being met, the costing system is working, promotion methods are successful, and hard-to-reach groups are being reached and assisted through the Scheme. It would also enable any arising problems to be dealt with promptly.
6. It is recommended that the Scheme be fully evaluated before the end of the initial three-year NDC funding period. Ideally, independent evaluators should be appointed by the 24-30 month stage, to enable the results of the evaluation to be reflected in funding applications.

#### **6.14. Sustainability**

1. Because the Scheme will be based in a deprived area where people's incomes are low, and because it is aimed at helping the most vulnerable members of the community, it is unlikely that enough income will be raised from user payments for the Scheme to become self-funding. Possible ways to create income streams for the Scheme are discussed in section 4.10.
2. The Scheme will therefore have to access other funding opportunities. NDC may grant continued funding, but this cannot be relied upon. The possibility of having the Scheme funded by mainstream service providers should be explored once the Scheme has a proven track record of success. Handy person Schemes in other areas are funded via Primary Care Trusts as well as local authorities, and these possibilities should be looked into. Developing and maintaining partnership links with mainstream providers from the outset (e.g. by inviting representatives onto the steering group) may increase the likelihood of the Scheme being granted mainstream funding. The Scheme may also be able to secure funding from voluntary and charitable sources.
3. Ideally, the Scheme Co-ordinator will have some previous experience of making funding applications to secure continued funding. There may also be some support available from the NDC Management and Admin team. The process of exploring future funding streams should be begun as soon as possible (at the latest, while the Scheme still has a year's funding left). Securing continued funding as soon as possible is likely to minimise the kind of problems experienced by short-term initiatives, such as staff loss.
4. Regular monitoring and review of the Scheme is important to ensure its sustainability. For instance, this would reveal whether the developing Scheme needed to alter or adapt its working practices to suit the local community. Independent evaluation will be likely to strengthen any funding applications.

## 6.15. Possibilities for development

The research flagged up a number of different issues, ideas and needs, not all of which have been incorporated into the current model. If the basic Handyerson Scheme is successful, there may be an opportunity to develop it further to include more activities. As well as taking account of any requests made in the future by service users and local residents, it is suggested that the Handyerson Scheme might wish to develop some or all of the following initiatives at a later date:

- a. Low cost gardening and/or interior decorating schemes, possibly using ILM trainees (any plans for a gardening initiative should take into account the proposed changes to the CATI);
- b. A therapeutic scheme to help vulnerable householders develop low-maintenance gardens, which they can then tend themselves;
- c. Developing a tradesmen's register, including measures to ensure reliability, such as police checks, references, assessments of work standards, and user surveys. This could be developed in conjunction with Anchor Staying Put or the Private Rented Project, both of which already keep lists of tradesmen;
- d. Providing basic training to householders to better enable them to maintain their own homes and do small repairs;
- e. Starting up a tool hire scheme or tool library.
- f. Recruiting volunteers to offer advice or sit with vulnerable people and keep them company while they are having work done (whether by the Handyerson Scheme or a tradesman).

## 7. Other research findings and recommendations

1. There appears to be substantial demand among elderly and vulnerable people in the NDC area for assistance with personal care. People described a wide range of different needs, such as having someone drop in for a cup of tea and a chat, running errands, picking up shopping, pensions, and library books, taking people out for doctors' appointments and visits, and cooking meals.
2. Schemes or initiatives that provide gardening services seem to be very much in demand in the NDC area. Although the City Council is planning to roll out the CATI gardening scheme across the City, this may only be open to elderly people who live in Local Authority accommodation. NDC might consider developing a gardening scheme under its environmental theme to address this need, perhaps involving a therapeutic element as described above.
3. Cheap painting and decorating services are also in demand in the NDC area. NDC might also consider developing a dedicated scheme employing and training local people in decorating skills (e.g. an ILM scheme).
4. A number of NDC residents expressed the opinion that they were tired of being asked their views about NDC. They felt that instead of spending time and money on doing research, NDC should get on with spending its funds in such a way that will help residents.

## **Appendix 1: UK Handyperson Schemes reviewed**

1. Age Concern Berkshire HP Scheme
2. Age Concern Leominster HP Scheme
3. Age Concern Malvern and District HP Scheme
4. Caithness HP Scheme
5. Care and Repair Elmbridge HP Scheme
6. Care and Repair Leeds HP Service
7. City Homecare Staffordshire HP Scheme
8. Cornwall (Penwith/Kerrier) HP Scheme
9. Durham Handy Van Scheme
10. Gateshead Handyperson Service (currently starting up)
11. Lochaber HP Scheme
12. Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association HP Scheme
13. Mid Devon HP Scheme
14. North Tyneside HP Scheme
15. Westhill (Inverurie) HP Scheme

## **Appendix 2: People who took part in interviews & meetings**

1. Alan Curry (Age Concern)
2. Ann Todd (Newcastle City Council's Housing Strategy for Older People)
3. Brian Dixon (Cruddas Park Neighbourhood Housing Officer)
4. Carol Harle (CHAT Shop)
5. Chris Mills (Capital Investment Manager, Capital Investment Directorate, City Council)
6. Claire McMullen (NDC Private Rented Project)
7. Dawn Solomon (PCT Pharmaceutical Adviser and Project Leader of NDC Complementary Therapies Project)
8. Jorge Lulic (City Council Community Participation Manager)
9. Five Newcastle Council BME Community Development Workers (at a team meeting)
10. Maggie Fisher (West Gate Home Help Service)
11. Maggy Crane (Search Project and WEHOP Co-ordinator)
12. Kathleen Saunder (Anchor Staying Put)
13. Anne Crowe (NDC Independence Project)
14. Paul Singh (NDC BME Housing Research Project)

15. Barbara Douglas (A Better Life in Later Life)
16. Peter Fletcher (Peter Fletcher Associates)
17. Representative (Community Action Training Initiative)
18. Representative (Disability North Independent Living Service)
19. Geoff Greg (Community Resource Team)
20. Sue Taylor (Northumbria Sight Service)
21. Alison Merton (NDC Family Safety Initiative)
22. Safety Advisor A (NDC Family Safety Initiative)
23. Safety Advisor B (NDC Family Safety Initiative)
24. Carol Yeoh (Cruddas Park Community Project)
25. Simon Wood (Cruddas Park Community Project)
26. Judith (Activities for Health)
27. Kevin Ridley (Park Road Community Association)
28. Linda Affleck (Gingerbread Trust/ Kids and Us)
29. Representative/Worker A (Gingerbread Trust/ Kids and Us)
30. Representative/Worker B (Gingerbread Trust/ Kids and Us)
31. Martin Brennan (Time Exchange)
32. Cath Morris (Time Exchange)
33. Norman (Praxis Ltd)
34. Rebecca (West End Befrienders)
35. Farida Rehman (West End Befrienders)
36. Wendy Wallace (Foundation Project)
37. Yasmin Kahn (Community Action on Health)

### **Appendix 3: Profile of NDC residents who took part in the research process**

#### **Participatory Appraisal (PA)**

The PA sessions involved consultation with 110 NDC area residents during a total of eight separate sessions. As well as asking for their views about the proposed Scheme, information about age and gender was collected. 70 females and 40 males took part in the consultation process. Two-thirds of the people consulted were aged 50 years or over. The remaining third were aged between 25 and 49 years, with the exception of a very small number of respondents, who were under 25. As the research sessions took place at local clubs, community and activity groups, and in public spaces, the majority of those people consulted may be classed as 'active'.

PA sessions were held at:

- ◆ Fishing Club (10 M);
- ◆ West End Befrienders (9 F, 1 M);
- ◆ Benwell Keep Fit (14 F);
- ◆ Chat Shop (4 F, 5 M);
- ◆ Cruddas Park Luncheon Club (8 M, 16 F);
- ◆ Wonder Walkers (7 F, 2 M);
- ◆ Cruddas Park Centre (12 F, 12 M)  
(verification session)
- ◆ Stanhope Street, Arthur's Hill area (8 F, 2 M)  
(verification session)

#### **Other contacts with local residents:**

Other consultants working on similar or related research projects during 2003 incorporated questions about the proposed Handyperson Scheme into their studies and shared the research findings with us. All such data has been incorporated into this report. A brief summary of these projects, and the people consulted through them, is given below.

1. Judith Green conducted a questionnaire survey of users of the NDC Independence Project during May-July 2003, as part of her evaluation of the project. The survey included questions about the proposed Handyperson Scheme. Respondents were asked to indicate their interest in a Handyperson Scheme, the types of work they would like to have done, who (if anyone) does these jobs for them currently, and whether they would be happy to pay for the service. 86 people returned completed questionnaires. All respondents were aged over 50 years of age, and more than two-thirds were over 70 years. 85% of respondents were female. Not all respondents lived in the NDC area, although almost all lived in the West End of Newcastle (42% in Benwell; 6% in Elswick; 24% in West City; 7% in Scotswood; 14% in Moorside, and 6% in other areas).
2. Peter Fletcher Associates (PFA) agreed to share the findings from their 'That Little Bit of Help' study, which was conducted in 2003. The study focused on what kind of support elderly people need to remain independent and in their own homes, whether this was help in the home or social support. The study was city-wide but included some concentrated work with people from BME groups in the West End of Newcastle. As well as sending us the interim report, PFA allowed us access to data from five focus groups that involved contact with approximately 40 people, including Asian men, Bangladeshi women, a group of 4 elderly Bosnians, 15 people from the South Mountain Chinese Older People's Club, and 12 elderly women at Roshni.
3. The NDC BME Housing Research Project is an 18-month project that began in February 2003. Eight link workers from the local Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities have been recruited and trained to carry out focus groups across the City. The aim is to find out about the long-term aspirations of BME community members across all age groups with regard to housing. The team agreed to use the focus groups as an opportunity to tell participants about the proposed Handyperson Scheme and find out how they felt about it. The team gave us a summary of the findings from focus groups held between September and December 2003, which involved around 170 residents of all ages from BME communities, living in different parts of the City.