



# ANNUAL REPORT

# CAMBRIDGESHIRE

# HOME IMPROVEMENT

# AGENCY

## 2024-25



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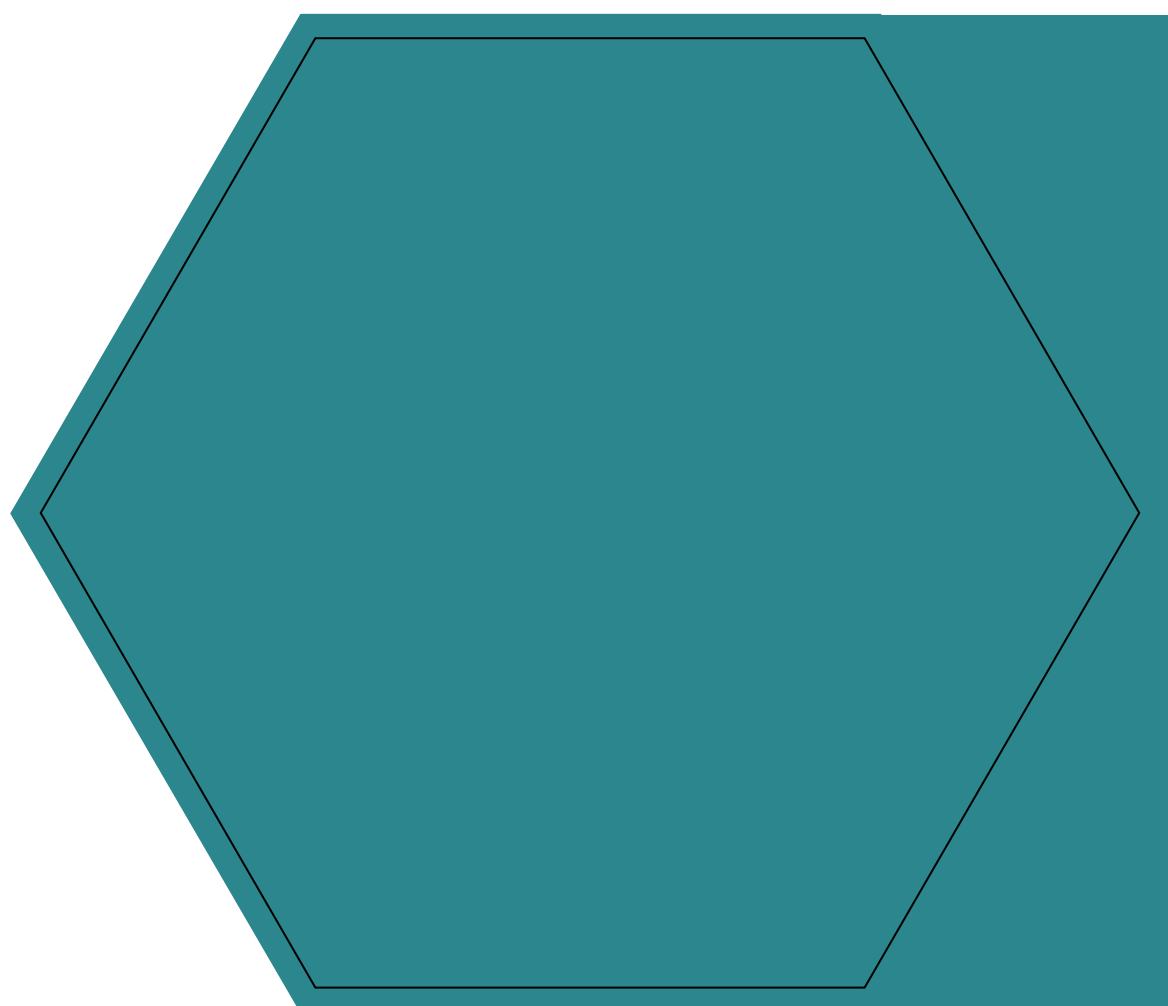


# Introduction

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**CLLR. GERRI BIRD**  
CAMBRIDGE CITY  
COUNCIL



**CLLR. STEPHEN  
FERGUSON**  
HUNTINGDONSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



**CLLR. JOHN BATCHELOR**  
SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

In February 2025 Local Council Leaders were asked to work with each other to develop proposals for Local Government Reorganisation. with the aim of acting as a catalyst for local public service reform by empowering local leaders to use their local knowledge to develop solutions.

In Cambridgeshire, we already have several shared services such as Cambs Home Improvement Agency (HIA) who are used to working in this collaborative way and will be well placed to mobilise into a new structure come 2028.

The NHS has also issued a 10 year plan “Fit for Future” which focusses on transforming the NHS by shifting care from hospital to communities, embracing digital technology and prioritising prevention over treatment. Cambs HIA role has always been one of prevention, helping people with disabilities and long-term health conditions to safely remain in their home for as long as possible keeping people local to their support and family networks.

As district councils we are going through a period of rapid change, a time when collaborative working will be key and an ability to have services which are *place based* and focused on social impact and outcomes will also lead on tackling poverty, reducing inequality and promoting an environmentally sustainable community.



# Governance



**HELEN REED**  
HOUSING STRATEGY  
MANAGER,  
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL



**CLAUDIA DEETH**  
OPERATIONAL MANAGER  
HUNTINGDONSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL



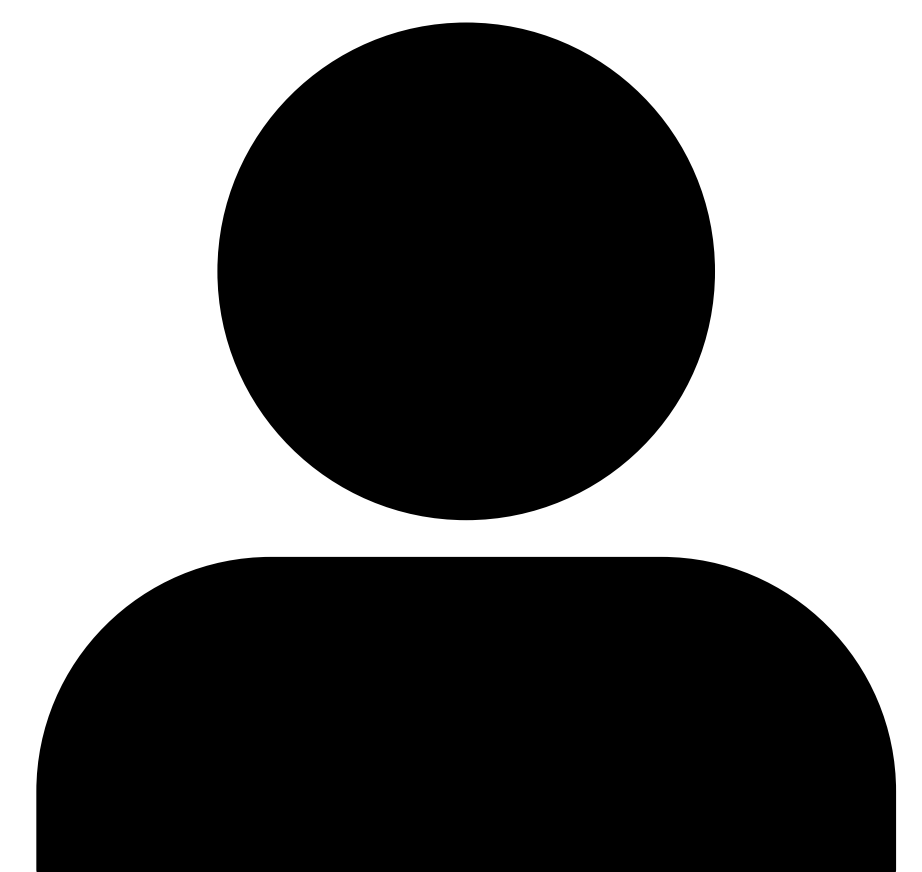
**JULIE FLETCHER**  
SERVICE MANAGER -  
HOUSING STRATEGY, SOUTH  
CAMBS DISTRICT COUNCIL



**LISA SPARKS**  
COMMISSIONER (ADULTS),  
CAMBRIDGESHIRE  
COUNTY COUNCIL



**FRANCES SWANN**  
STRATEGIC HOME  
IMPROVEMENT AGENCY  
LEAD



**JULIA HOVELLS**  
ASSISTANT HEAD OF  
FINANCE AND BUSINESS  
MANAGER,  
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL





# A Message from our Manager

Frances Swann

For a variety of reasons 2024/25 has been a challenging year. We experienced some long-term absence in the team and welcomed a new surveyor following Anne Devenport's retirement after over 20 years at the council.

We also experienced longer completion times due to significant delays obtaining landlord consent from one major landlord in the area.



Over recent years, increasing construction costs have impacted on the speed of which adaptations can be completed. This is a national problem. The maximum grant allowance remains fixed at £30,000 and the average small bathroom and bedroom extension costs around £50,000. We have created a new high-cost leaflet which gives advice to applicants about how they might source additional funding, and we have worked closely with the County Council and our neighbouring home improvement agencies to agree a pathway for those who may be eligible for additional funding from the County Council. Unfortunately, however there are times when we simply cannot help because this additional funding cannot be sourced.

During 2024/25, we worked collaboratively across the three councils to update our Policy. Four of the five district councils have now increased their discretionary top up funding to £30,000 for those who qualify which means that we are more able to complete the afore mentioned high-cost adaptations. In the remaining district, where demand for adaptations exceeds the government allocation, we are also working towards a small discretionary fund that can be used in a similar way.

The team continue to contribute to tackling housing equalities for disabled people and delivering outcomes which help to ensure a health and safe home for disabled people.





# About Us

Cambs HIA is a not-for-profit organisation funded and supported by local and central government. We provide advice, support and assistance to older people, people with disabilities and vulnerable people who own and live in their own property, or those in privately rented or housing association accommodation.



We help people repair, improve, maintain or adapt their homes to meet their changing needs. The purpose of the service is to help people to remain independent, warm, safe and secure in their own homes.

This year we welcomed a new Surveyor to our team, and we are also looking to recruit a new Operational Manager.



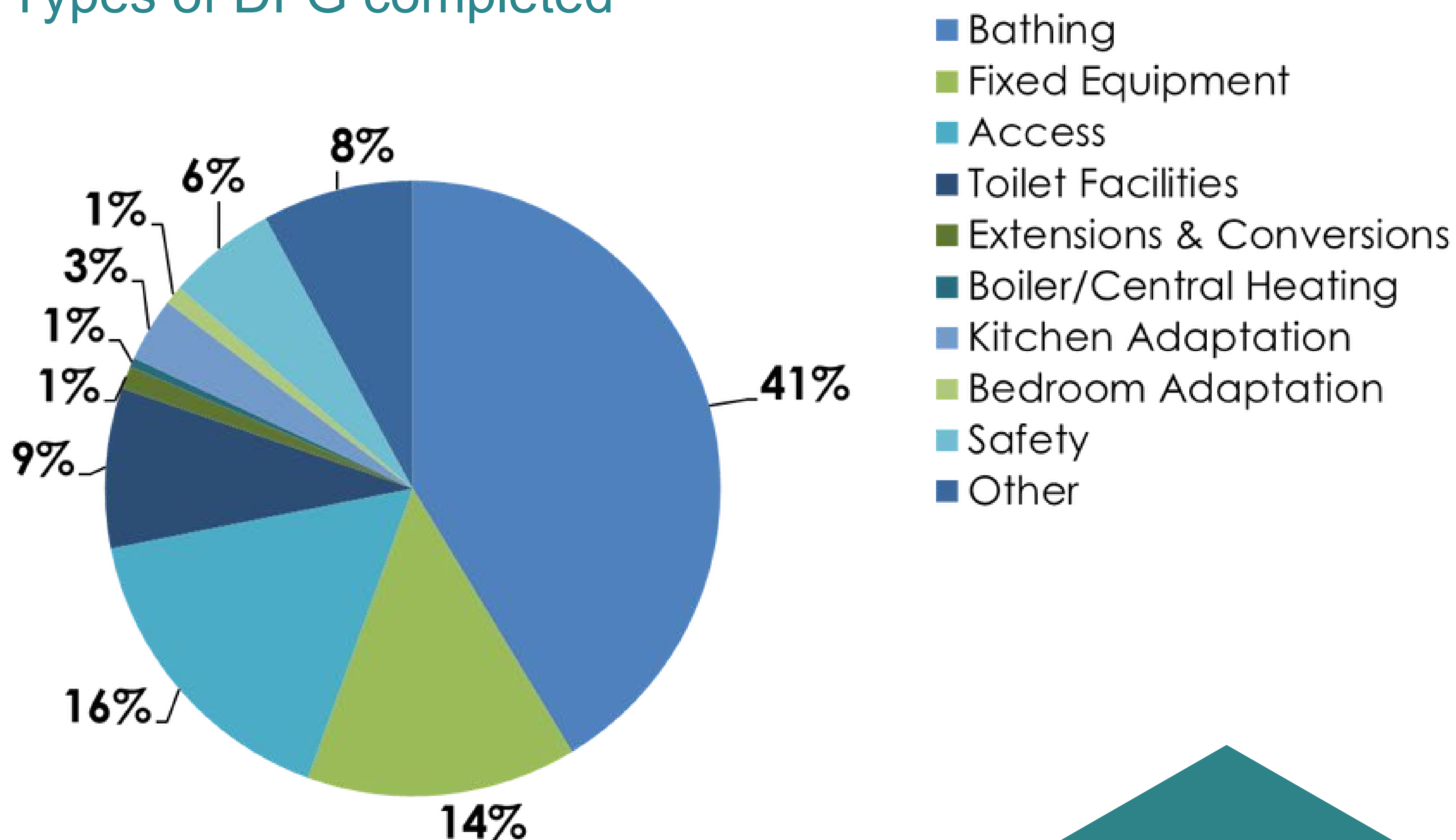


# 2024 - 2025 Highlights

## Completed Works

In 2024 -25 we enabled 316 people with long term health conditions to adapt and repair their homes .

### Types of DFG completed



6

Private jobs completed  
for client's ineligible  
for a grant



31

Special Purpose  
Grants completed in  
Cambridge City &  
South Cambs



57

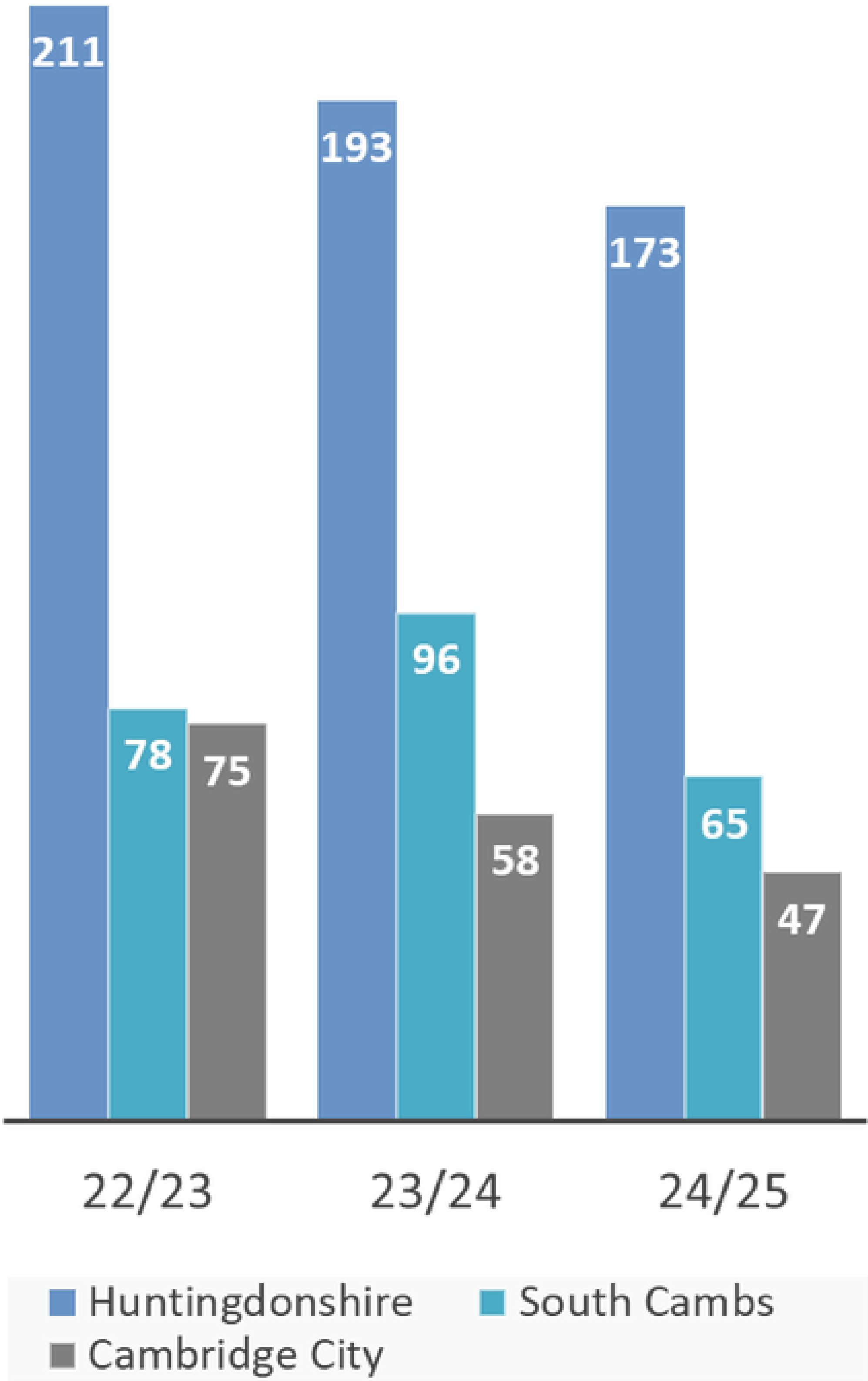
Disabled Facilities  
Grants completed for  
children with  
disabilities







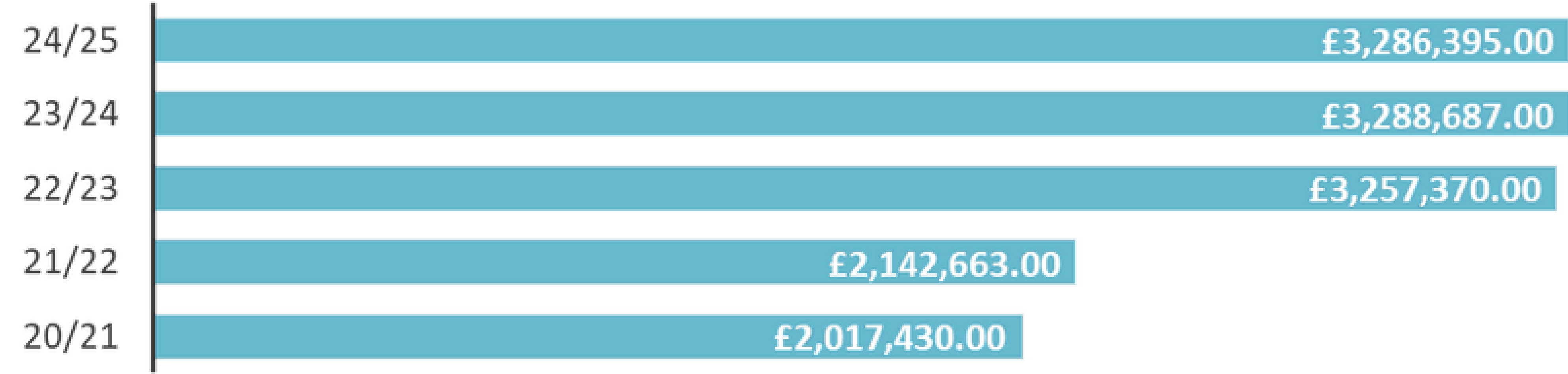
482 Preliminary Tests of Resources completed to check client eligibility



## No. of DFGs Completed

\*Numbers are lower for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire due to disabled adaptations for council homes being delivered separately by the councils' housing management service .

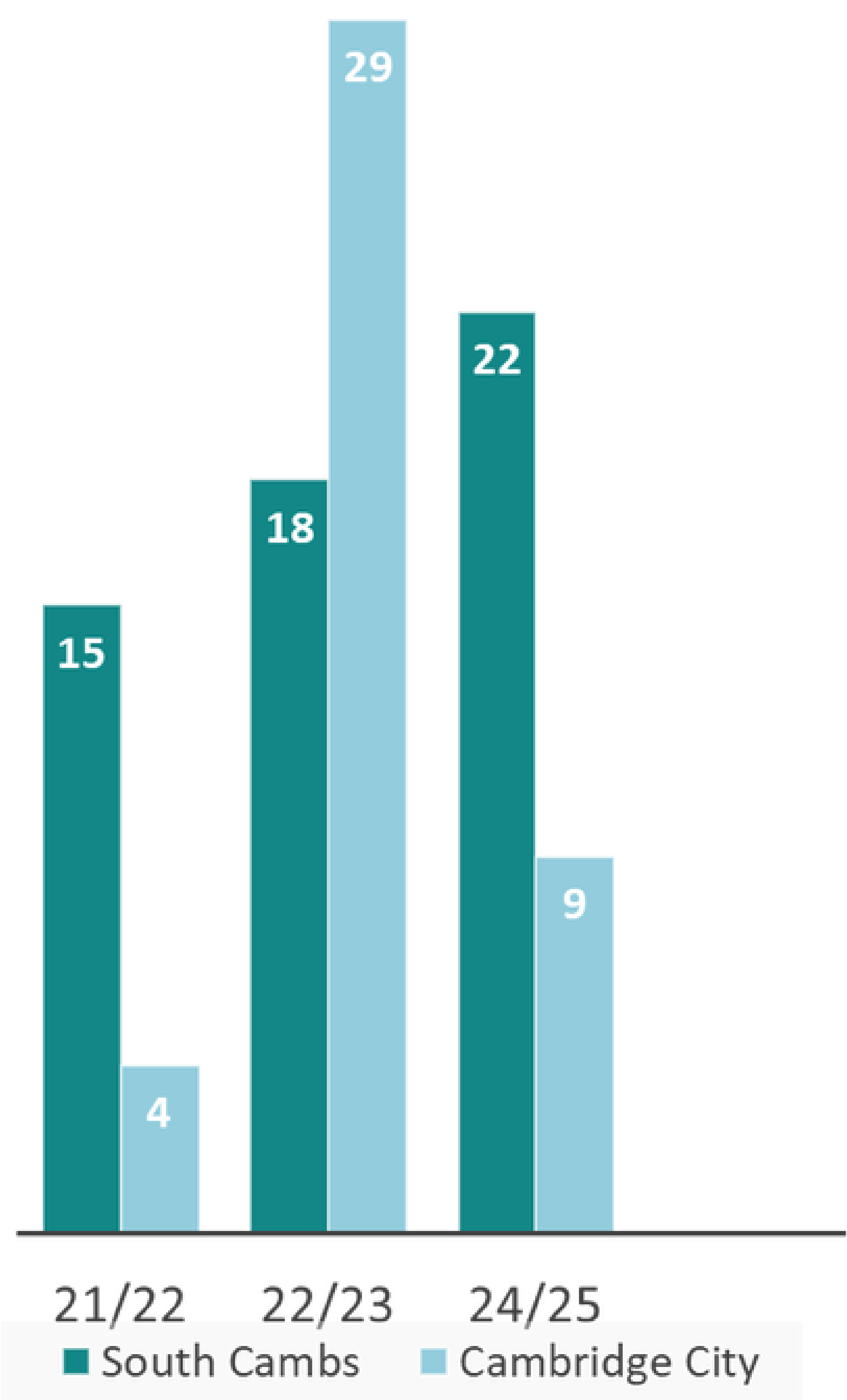
## DFG Spend







# Special Purpose Grants Completed



1089

General enquiries received by Cambs HIA in 2024-25

# Onward Referrals



We made **41** onward referrals last year to help people:

- Get housing advice.
- Charitable Funding
- Falls Prevention Assessment
- Bobby Scheme
- Install Community Alarms



# Social Media

This year Cambs HIA made a concerted effort to increase its social media presence to help raise the profile of Disabled Facility Grants both locally and nationally. Our Business Support staff Rachael and Clare have learned how to use Canva, a software system that aids design to create branded posts which highlight the excellent work of the Agency.

Not only have our posts reflected on examples of the Agency's work but also of the feedback from our customers and of local events.



We also held a workshop for other Agencies on how to use marketing tools to promote your brand and awareness of home adaptations and repairs grants. We learned how to use Artificial Intelligence tools (AI) to help us write the content of our posts and we learned how to measure market engagement and identify the types of posts that were well received.







### Key changes included:

- The policies will be operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.

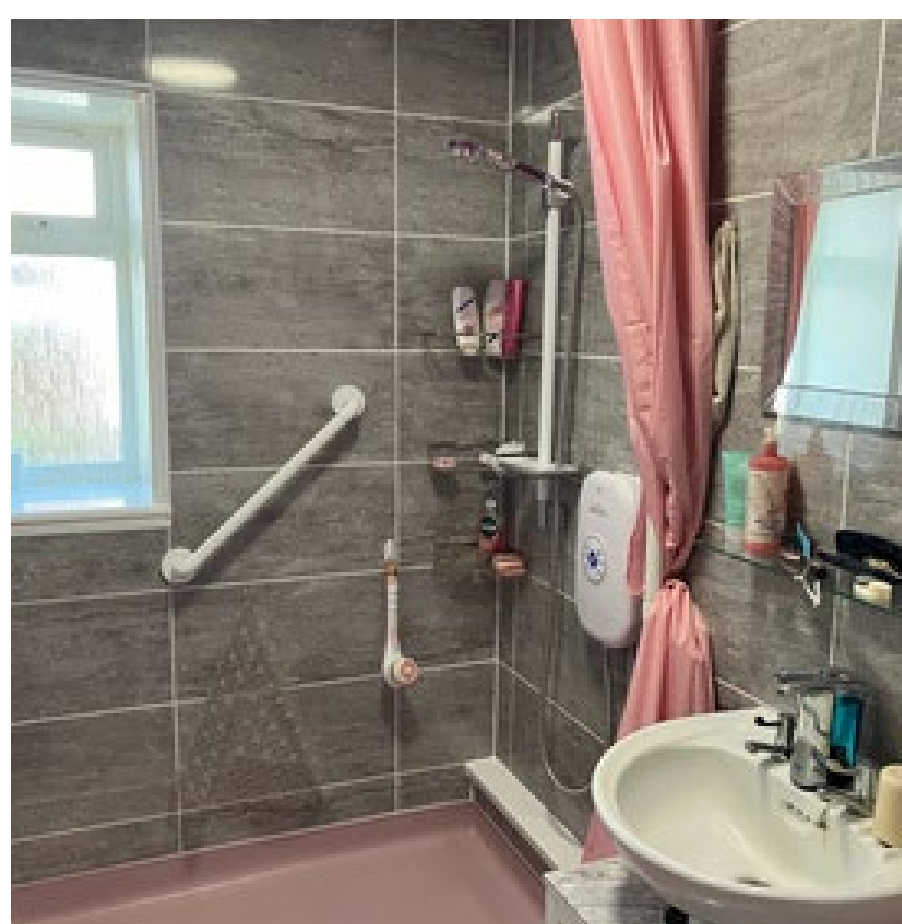




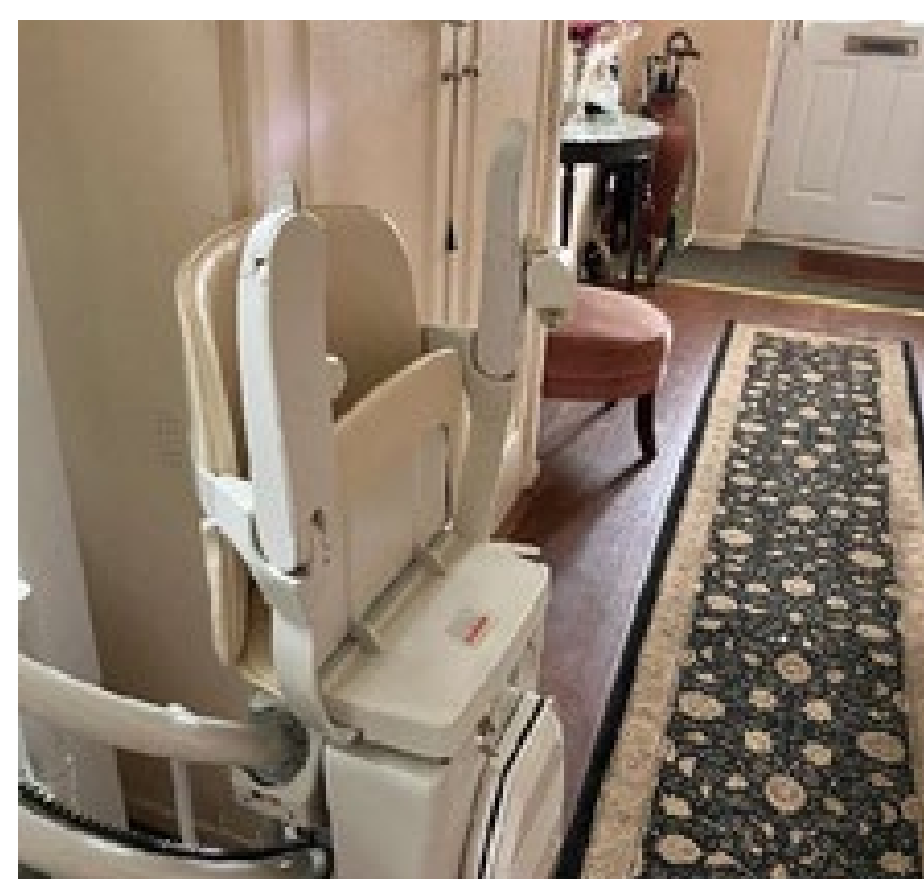
# Customer Satisfaction

This year, we experienced a small reduction in customer satisfaction. We attribute this in part to increases in the time taken to complete adaptations which we have explained is associated with delays in landlords providing timely consent for us to work in their properties and because of staff shortages.

As an Agency which is predominantly self funding, the ability to recruit additional staff to provide cover is somewhat prohibitive and we had to make the decision to accept a small downturn in customer satisfaction predominantly due to longer waiting times to balance the Agency's running costs in the short term.



"I would just like to thank you for the installation of the wet room in my home. I'm very happy with the service I received and with the contractors. They were very professional and did a great job making sure everything was done with my health problems in mind. I couldn't recommend yourself or the contractors anymore you were both great"



"I know going upstairs is safe and I cannot fall. Greatly appreciated - thank you. I received excellent service, polite, helpful and tidy"

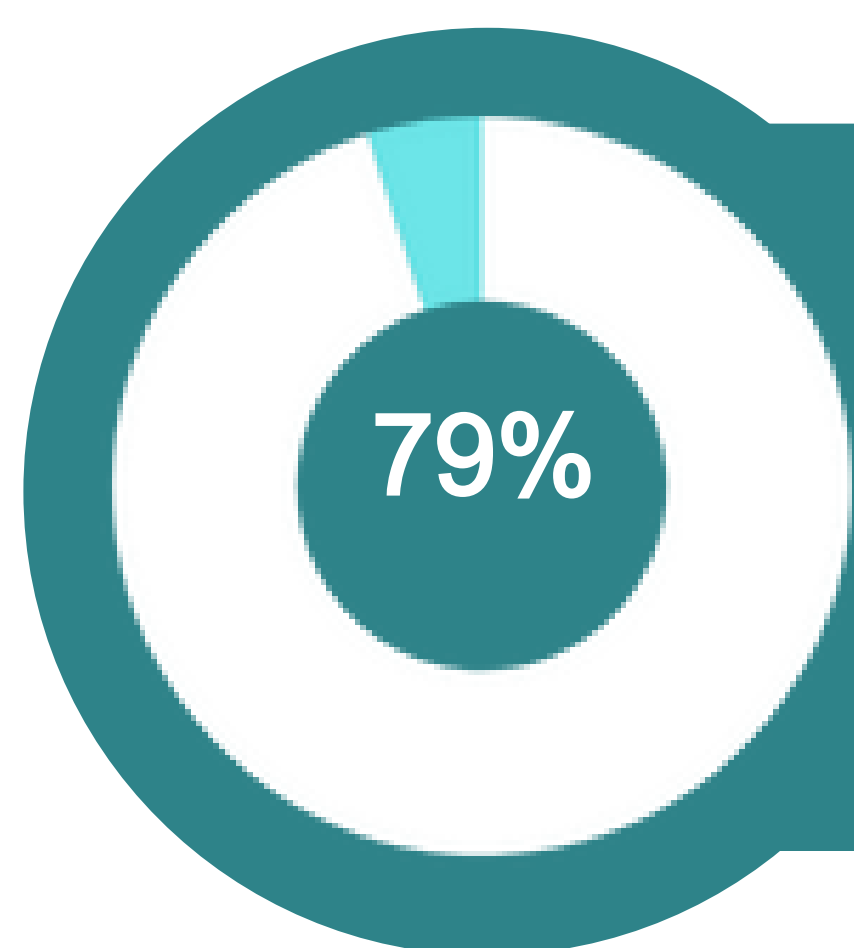


"It has enabled my daughter's carers to get me out of my park home as I am unable to walk without aid. The lift allows the carers to get me out, but to do it on my own would not be possible."

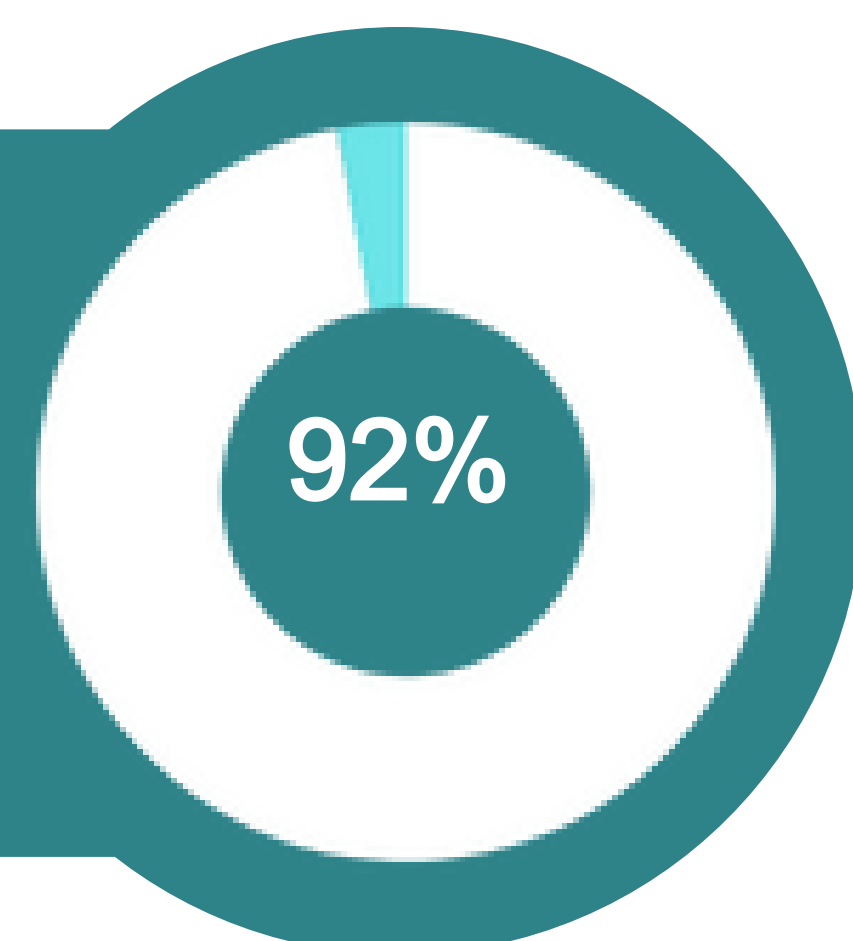




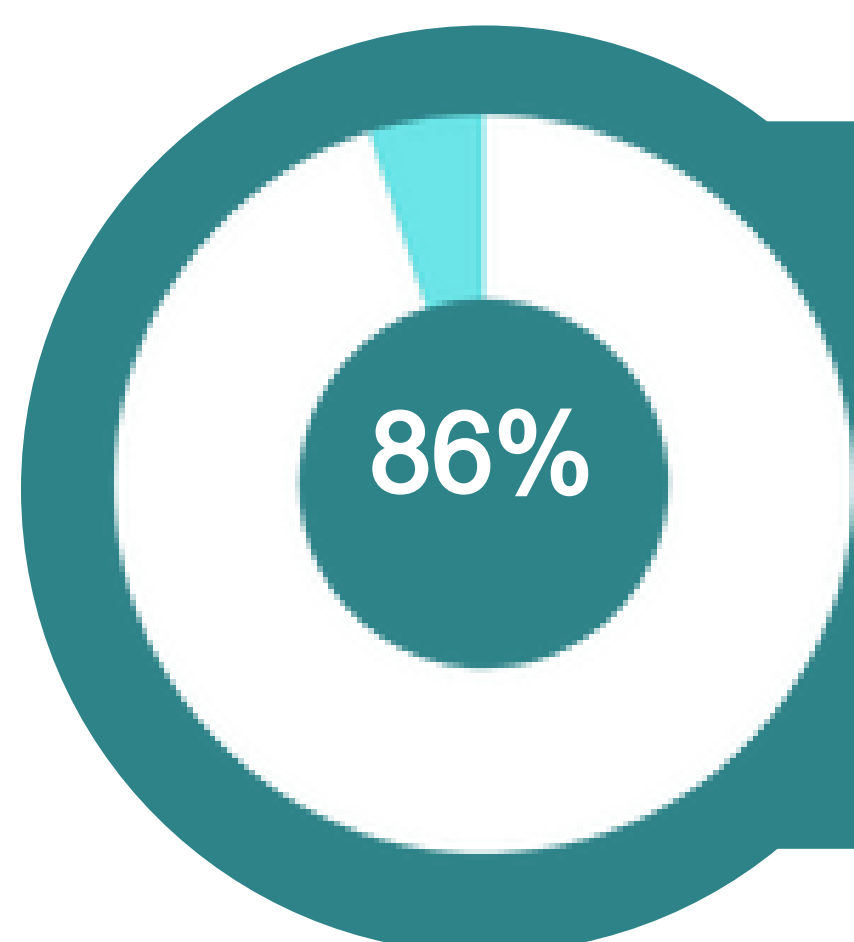
# | Customer Satisfaction



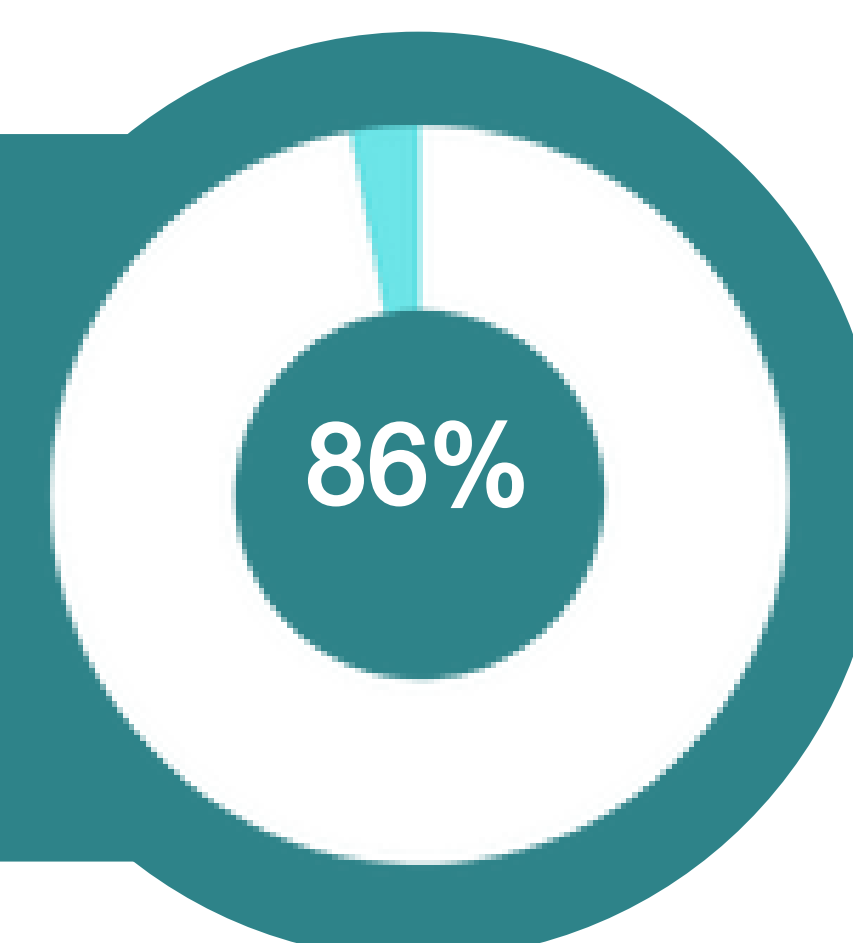
Rated Cambs HIA's advice as very good or excellent



Rated the attitude and politeness of contractors as excellent or very good.



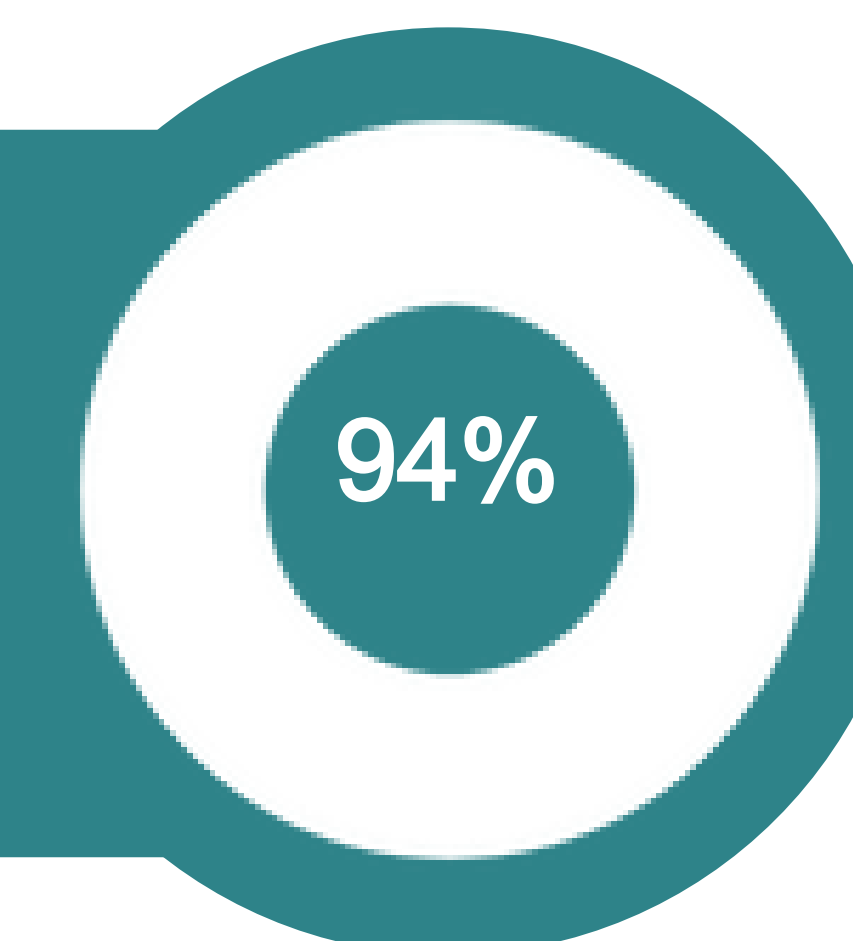
Rated us excellent or very good in terms of tidiness



Rated our quality of work as excellent or very good.



Said that our work improved their health and wellbeing



Were satisfied overall with our service



# Customer Satisfaction

As mentioned above customer satisfaction reduced this year. This is mainly due to delays associated with obtaining landlord consents.

Cambs HIA, Huntingdonshire District Council and the Occupational Therapists have been working with a specific landlord to encourage them to improve the time they take to provide the Agency with owner consent for adaptation work. Due to staffing shortages at Places for People this has taken time to overcome but we have seen a marked improvement at the time of writing this report.

Most landlords take around two weeks to provide owner consent for adaptations, which is a requirement of the disabled facility grant and unfortunately this particular landlord was taking several months.

Another improvement we have made to manage customer expectations is to improve the way we manage high-cost adaptation requests. As the maximum grant available is only £30,000, this no longer covers the costs of extension work or grants that exceed this sum. So, we have designed a new leaflet which is given to customers from the outset to explain the options they have in terms of funding any costs above the statutory maximum. We also ensure our Surveyors and Caseworkers are discussing this with applicants at the outset to openly manage customer expectations.

In Cambridge City and South Cambs, we have also increased the Top Up grant available from £15,000 to £30,000 to give us a better opportunity to provide adaptations where funding allows.





# Statement of Financial Activities

(Operating costs of Cambs Home Improvement Agency)

	31-Mar 2023	31-Mar 2024	31-Mar 2025
HIA Fees	(413,617)	(403,965)	(440,532)
External Funding (Cambridgeshire County Council, etc.)	(226,000)	(125,990)	(225,990)
Other Income (including landlord & client contributions, & fees from private works)	(47,690)	(155,739)	(86,294)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(687,307)</b>	<b>(685,694)</b>	<b>(752,816)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Cost of generating funds	604,612	834,549	736,063
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>604,612</b>	<b>834,549</b>	<b>736,063</b>
<b>Net income/expenditure before recognised gains and losses</b>	<b>(82,695)</b>	<b>148,855</b>	<b>(16,754)</b>
<b>Trading (Surplus) /Deficit b/f</b>	<b>(448,663)</b>	<b>(531,358)</b>	<b>(382,503)</b>
<b>Trading (Surplus) /Deficit c/f</b>	<b>(531,358)</b>	<b>(382,503)</b>	<b>(399,257)</b>

## Last Year We...



Completed 324 grants for:

- 177 housing association tenants
- 136 owner occupiers
- 9 private rented tenants
- 1 leaseholders
- 1 council tenant (funded by the housing service)



# Our Goals for 2025/26

Our goals for this year are closely aligned with the values of the three councils that we work with.



## Collaborative

- To support and inform decisions that impact the Agency and its customers relating to Local Government Review.
- To use the Low -Income Family Tracker system to promote increase take up of the Disabled Facility Grant.



## Compassionate

- To introduce new grants which improve health outcomes for local people.
- To continue to reach out to residents from diverse backgrounds in line with our Diversity, Equality, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy.



## Accountable

- To review the Agency's fees and charges.
- To achieve full assurance from Audit.
- To make clear and early decisions on high -cost cases and to communicate that outcome well.



## Challenging

- To improve social value impact outcomes in major works contracts.
- To improve how our service measures health & wellbeing outcomes for local people.





# With Thanks To.....



## Approved Contractors

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

## 3c Building Control

who check and sign off work as being compliant with building regulations .



## Occupational Therapists

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



## Local Authority Grants Officers and Private Sector Housing Teams

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



## Charitable Organisations

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



# Tell Us What You Think

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

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



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[www.cambshia.org](http://www.cambshia.org)

## Social Media



**Instagram**

@Cambridge HIA



**Facebook**

@Cambs HIA



**Twitter**

@Cambs HIA



**LinkedIn**

Cambs Home  
Improvement Agency