

# Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Network

## Health Improvement Board Briefing - February 2016

### Summary

This paper includes an overview of fuel poverty issues in Oxfordshire and recent work to address them. The latest figures for the Fuel Poverty outcome measure are given. An outline of the British Gas funded Better Housing Better Health project, led by the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth network is also included.

### Fuel Poverty in Oxfordshire

The Low Income High Cost (LIHC) fuel poverty indicator gives an indication of the proportion of households in a particular area are deemed to be in fuel poverty<sup>1</sup>. The latest figure for Oxfordshire is 8.7%, in England it is around 11%. This data is also available at District and Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) levels. The lowest level of fuel poverty for an LSOA in Oxfordshire is 2% and the highest is 33%. The figures in the LSOAs highlight the extremes of regional variation, even between wards.

Oxfordshire partners tackle Fuel Poverty, mostly through the Affordable Warmth Network (AWN), to which most partners contribute financially. The **National Energy Foundation** (NEF) provides the administrative work on behalf of all the partners. They support the work of AWN set out in the Action Plan and raise awareness of Fuel Poverty. This means that clients can make direct contact with NEF as well as getting information from their local district council. The key partners who contribute financially are Cherwell District Council (DC), West Oxfordshire DC, South Oxfordshire DC and Vale of White Horse DC, Oxfordshire County Council Public Health, Citizens Advice Bureau and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. Other organisations have associate membership - Oxford City Council, Age UK, Low Carbon Hubs and Oxford Brookes University.

The offer to Oxfordshire residents by the AWN includes

- Sourcing and provision of funds to provide free or reduced loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, solid wall insulation, new boilers, to tackle cold and damp.
- Enforcement of poor housing conditions to reduce Excess Cold and Damp and Mould in private sector housing
- Provision of advice around keeping your home warm, through better knowledge and behaviours, including a free helpline around what additional financial help is available.
- Support accessing full benefit entitlements.

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#### <sup>1</sup> **Low Income High Cost Indicator: Definition**

Under the new **Low Income High Cost** definition a household is considered to be fuel poor where:  
\* they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)

\*were they to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

The low income high cost indicator consists of two parts:

The **number** of households that have both low incomes and high fuel costs

The **depth** of fuel poverty amongst these households. This is measured in terms of a fuel poverty gap, which represents the difference between the modelled fuel bill for each household, and the reasonable cost threshold for the household. This is summed for all households that have both low income and high costs to give an aggregate fuel poverty gap.

- Development of projects to improve communications between existing and new partners, such as health and social and health colleagues.

### **Oxfordshire's Fuel Poverty Outcome reported to the Health Improvement Board**

The Fuel Poverty outcome is the number of “significant increases” made to a property as a result of the work of the partners of the AWN. Significant increases were defined as

- loft insulation (including top-ups where the insulation level was at least doubled),
- Cavity Wall insulation,
- External Wall insulation,
- Installation of a more efficient boiler,
- Installation of a more efficient heating system,
- Upgrading of windows from single glazing and
- Increase in the uptake of benefits (at least £1200).

The breakdown of the figures up to the end of Q3 in 2015-16 are in Appendix 1 of this report. This is a summary of the activity which has been carried out in line with 2014/2015 Fuel Poverty Action Plan, as well as the day to day activities of the partners who work on fuel poverty, for example by delivering benefits assessments, housing inspections, awarding of grants and loans and giving out advice.

*This figure reported is not complete and there may be some variation in how the measures are recorded and reported.*

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy sets a baseline target of 550 households being helped. We can report that there were 1418 properties in Oxfordshire who received significant increase in the energy efficiency of their homes in the latest reporting period (Q1 to Q3), up from 1109 in the same reporting period last year. 164 of these were physical improvements to homes, down from 249. 1245 benefits assessments were carried out, up from 860 and it is estimated that an additional £6.51 million of additional benefits were identified.

With the closure of the Green Deal (a flagship loan scheme for energy efficiency improvements in peoples homes) and currently no scheme to replace it, there continues to be a heavy reliance on lifting people out of fuel poverty predominantly through increase in income (increase in benefits). Fuel bills are affected by wholesale fuel prices and the families own unique circumstances, but if the property remains inefficient in its production and retention of heat then there may be little long term advantage to increasing income. This means it is not a long term solution, both for the residents and the potential impacts on their health, or the environment.

### **Action Plan and other project updates**

#### **Better Housing, Better Health**

The Oxfordshire AWN and Buckinghamshire AWN were successful in winning £412,5000 grant from the British Gas Energy Trust (<http://www.britishgasenergytrust.org.uk/>) to deliver a year long project to tackle cold homes and health. The aim is to link up the work

of the AWN to Health and Social Care providers and also provide some additional grant funding for energy efficiency improvements to those whose inability to adequately heat their home is affecting their cardiovascular or respiratory condition. This is a well-timed and needed resource in light of the recommendations in the NICE guidance (NG6) on Excess Winter Deaths, which recommends a “single point of contact for health and housing referral service for people living in cold homes”. The funding through this grant is for 2016 only. Funding will need to be found for the following year to

- a) fund the administration of the scheme
- b) fund the additional resources required to reach in to health and social care providers,
- c) provide the enhanced offer from the AWN (Home Energy Checks),
- d) maintain the additional grant fund for those with health conditions
- e) fund the existing work of the AWN (free phone telephone number for local advise and access to grants, administrative support of the network, general promotional activity).

For more information please visit the website ([www.nef.org.uk/bhbh](http://www.nef.org.uk/bhbh) ) or speak to Alex Steeland at National Energy Foundation (NEF): alexandra.steeland@nef.org.uk.

The need to maintain this investment is even greater now with the Green Deal being stopped as the Oxfordshire-based community interest company, Green Homes Together has now unfortunately ceased activities. This had been key in providing the building based measures to Oxfordshire residents.

References:

NICE Guidance (March 2015) Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes - <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6>

Department for Energy and Climate Change: Fuel Poverty report 2013 ([DECC 2013](#)).

Written by Kate Eveleigh, Health Improvement Practitioner with the support of the Affordable Warmth Network

## Summary of the Affordable Warmth Network Activities 15/16

### “Offers and resource”

Easy Save booklet and factsheet for residents

Free cavity wall and loft insulation, utilising ECO grants

25 community group talks given / events attended

Assistance to switch to a cheaper energy tariff provided

CSCO areas mapped in Cherwell and Oxford

Off gas areas and fuel poverty on JSNA website

Health data (COPD) from GPs sourced and mapped by CSU/CCG

Better Housing, Better Health project launched following successful funding bid

### “Partnerships”

New referral sources from health and social care used to target vulnerable residents

Cross referrals between CAB, Age UK and NEF.

NEF attended Age UK CIN events

NEF worked with Consumer Empowerment Partnership through Big Energy Saving Week, and spoke at their Fuel Poverty Forum.

Links being developed with Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service

### “Community Engagement”

Outreach activity has directly advised over 1,200 residents face-to-face

Assistance provided for community group thermal imaging projects, targeted towards fuel poor regions

### “Communication and Promotion”

Community outreach offered

Easy Save booklet and factsheet

New banner stands produced, with health-housing link messaging

Editorial in The Volunteer, Resident Guides across the county and parish newsletters

Winter Warmth Pharmacy campaign

Appraisal and updates of council websites and communications

Targeted mail-outs undertaken with local authorities to promote availability of grants

**Appendix 1: Health Improvement Partnership Board – Update from Oxon Affordable Warmth Network, Q1, Q2 and Q3 of 2015/2016**

|                                 | Vale of White Horse | South Oxon | West Oxon | Cherwell | Oxford City | Citizens Advice Bureaux      | Affordable Warmth Network | AgeUK Oxfordshire            | Green Deal Together | Other (inc. DECC Communities programme) | Total |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|------------|-----------|----------|-------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---|-------|
| # HHSRS excess cold resolved    | 3                   | 3          | 18        | 20       | 26          |                              |                           |                              |                     |   | 52    |
| # HHSRS Damp & Mould resolved   | 17                  | 18         | 48        | 22       | 28          |                              |                           |                              |                     |   | 85    |
| # Boilers installed             | 0                   | 0          | 0         | 3        | 2           |                              | TBC                       |                              | Ceased operating    | 0                                       | 5     |
| # More efficient heating system | 3                   | 0          | 0         | 5        | 0           |                              | TBC                       |                              |                     | 0                                       | 8     |
| # loft top ups                  | 1                   | 2          | 0         | 1        | 0           |                              | TBC                       |                              |                     | 0                                       | 4     |
| # double glazed windows         | 0                   | 0          | 0         | 1        | 6           |                              | TBC                       |                              |                     | 0                                       | 7     |
| # Cavity Wall                   | 0                   | 0          | 0         | 1        | 0           |                              | TBC                       |                              |                     | 0                                       | 1     |
| # External Wall                 | 2                   | 0          | 0         | 0        | TBC         |                              | TBC                       |                              |                     | 9                                       | 2     |
| # Uptake of benefit             |                     |            |           |          |             | £4,500,000 for 790 clients.* |                           | £2,018,456 for 464 clients.* |                     |   |       |
|                                 |                     |            |           |          |             |                              |                           |                              |                     | Total                                   | 1418  |

\* Annual amount of additional benefits claimed on behalf of eligible residents.

