

Oxfordshire



Affordable Warmth Network

End of Year Report 2012-2013





INTRODUCTION TO THE OXFORDSHIRE NETWORK

Launched in 2010 following a successful bid for a Performance Reward Grant related to the Local Area Agreement (LAA1 2006-2009), the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Network, operated by National Energy Foundation (previously United Sustainable Energy Agency), has gone from strength to strength, currently funded by the district authorities across Oxfordshire. The network includes, and works closely with, the following organisations, amongst others (such as housing associations also):





AIMS & BACKGROUND TO THE NETWORK

The aim of the network is to enable residents across Oxfordshire to achieve affordable warmth. Affordable warmth can be accomplished through a combination of assistance (both advice on behavioural change and financial assistance), such as provision of good home insulation, access to grants, energy efficiency and benefit checks. Residents will then benefit from lower fuel bills, improved health as well as warmer, more comfortable homes. Although the most vulnerable of residents, likely to be in fuel poverty are targeted, the network doesn't exclude anyone, as the associated helpline is open to all with no eligibility criteria. The network takes a strategic approach, reflecting the complexity of the issue.

The Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy published in 2001 set out two key aims: to eradicate fuel poverty among vulnerable groups by 2010 and to eradicate fuel poverty among all groups by 2016. Clearly, the first aim has been missed, and the second looks unlikely to be met, especially given the recent increases to the price of gas and electricity. In terms of numbers, there were 3.5 million households in fuel poverty in 2006. This rose to an estimated 5.1 million by October 2008, meaning that 1 in 5 households in the UK were fuel poor (National Energy Action, 2008). This number continued to rise until 2010 (the most recent data available) when there was a small fall in UK levels of fuel poverty.

In the UK Fuel Poverty strategy (BERR, 2001), the Government defines a household as living in fuel poverty if, *"In order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, they are required to spend more than 10 percent of their income on all household fuel use"*. A satisfactory temperature is given to be 21°C in the living room and 18°C in any other occupied room. However there are exceptions to this. For example, vulnerable older people should aim to achieve 21°C in all main rooms as they are more susceptible to the problems of living in a cold home, those with long term health conditions that are further exacerbated by excess cold are recommended to heat their home to higher temperatures.

There are many health risks associated with living in a cold, damp home. Over the winter of 2008 for example, 25 300 additional people died in the UK compared to the rest of the year (The Times, 2008). Health implications include heart attacks, strokes, respiratory illness, hypothermia and falls. Falls are a major problem with older people and can result in increased hospital admissions. Also residents could suffer from psychological and social problems linked with living in cold conditions, such as depression. Young people may be less likely to socialise with friends leading to social exclusion and could suffer with poor school performance. The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy (BERR, 2001) estimated the cost to the NHS of cold related illnesses to be £1 billion per year.

Although the health risks of fuel poverty apply to all groups, there are certain sectors of society which are more susceptible, as they spend longer periods at home. Older people, the disabled, the long-term sick, the unemployed and very young children are all groups at serious risk. For them it can be a choice between adequately heating their home or buying other essential items such as food. These vulnerable groups also tend to be the hardest to reach with information. In terms of tenure, owner-occupied and private rented properties tend to contain more residents in fuel poverty than social housing. The private sector has not benefited from extensive investment in terms of



insulation and heating in comparison with social housing. Any improvements made have resulted from owners initiating improvements of their own property. To encourage these improvements many of the grants are aimed at owner-occupied properties.

There are seven main reasons people find themselves in fuel poverty:

1. **Household income too low** – This could be caused by unemployment, inability to work due to ill health or caring responsibilities. Pensioners may also find themselves in this situation, having come to the end of their working-life.
2. **Inefficient homes** – This could be caused by little or no insulation leading to high fuel bills.
3. **Inefficient heating systems** – Old boilers with limited controls or storage heaters (electric heating) can be expensive to run.
4. **Under-occupancy** – With only a small number of people living in a large house, it costs more per person to keep warm.
5. **Limited awareness of the best tariff from energy suppliers** – Knowledge of how to get the cheapest deals for energy, how best to pay, to take meter readings and to keep abreast of changing energy tariffs is key to keeping bills to a minimum. .
6. **Fear of high bills** – Householders can fear receiving high energy bills so they do not switch their heating on, resulting in them living in cold homes. This is particularly an issue among older people.
7. **High fuel costs** – Recently there has been a sharp increase in the cost of all fuels. Low income households often use prepayment meters to pay for their energy which typically costs more as compared to paying by direct debit. Also properties off the gas network are subject to more expensive fuels such as oil, LPG or electricity.

There are partial solutions to most of these problems. Household income can be improved by carrying out a benefits assessment to check the householder is receiving all benefits they are entitled to, and with around £4.2 billion of benefits going unclaimed each year. Energy bills can be reduced by improving the thermal efficiency of homes through insulation , by measures to improve the efficiency of heating systems and through increasing the householder’s awareness of energy efficiency. .



DETAIL OF NETWORK ACTIVITY IN THE YEAR 2012 - 2013

Installations from Cocoon Free Scheme:

Local Authority	Households Installed	Cavity Wall Insulation	Loft Insulation Virgin	Loft Insulation Top-up	Total Installed Measures
Oxford City	13	8	7	4	19
Vale of White Horse	36	18	10	17	45
South Oxfordshire	39	19	13	15	47
Cherwell	241	158	73	66	297
West Oxfordshire	34	16	5	18	39
Totals	363	219	108	120	447

‘Cocoon Free’ was the insulation scheme operated by United Sustainable Energy Agency, offering free loft and cavity wall insulation to residents across Oxfordshire. The network traditionally reported on ‘insulation measures installed’ through this scheme as this closely matched priorities of the Affordable Warmth Network.

The above data covers Q1 to Q3 (April 2012 to December 2012) only, as there were no installations to report under the Cocoon Free Insulation Scheme in Oxon for Q4, January 2013 to March 2013, following the closure of the scheme to new referrals (due to the end of available CERT funding) at the end of Q2.

A total of 447 measures were installed in 363 households, meaning that more than one measure was installed per household in 84 cases. The split between cavity wall insulation and loft insulation was roughly equal, as was the split between those lofts classified as virgin (where no loft prior insulation was present) and top-up (where loft insulation was put in place where there was already some in place, a top up).

The local authority with the most measures installed was Cherwell, with almost 5 times the number of measures installed and households benefiting, as compared to the other Oxon local authorities. Other than Cherwell the other local authorities had very similar total number of measures installed and households benefitting.



Affordable Warmth Helpline

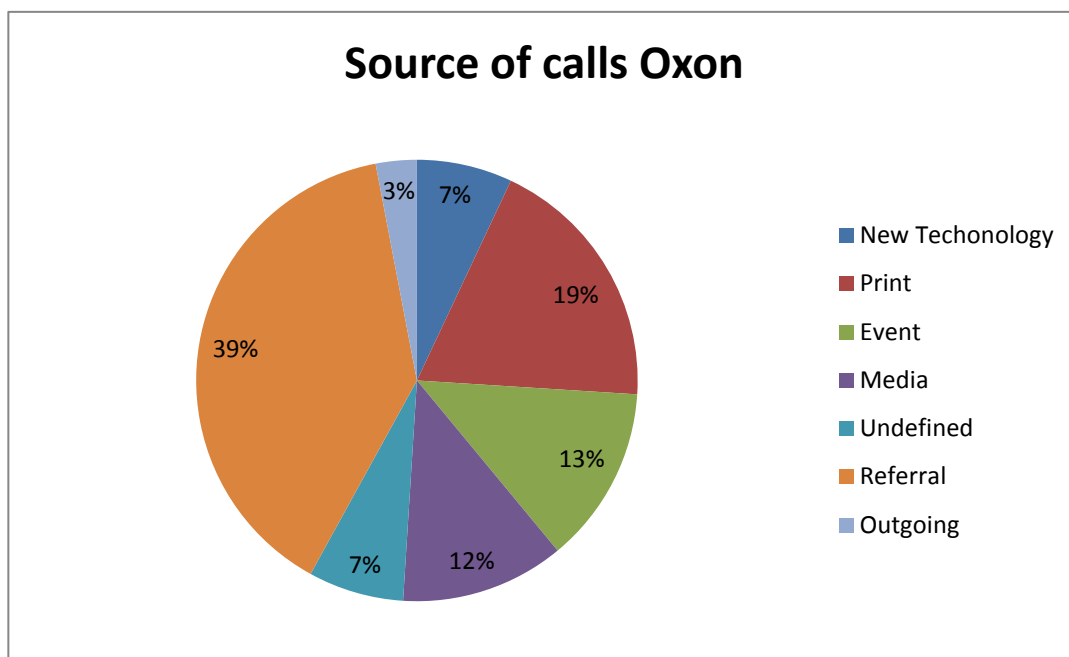
Calls to the Affordable Warmth Helpline:

The following callers were referred to appropriate organisations for help depending on the nature of their call:

Local Authority	General Advice	Heating	Signposted/ referred	Repairs	Other	Total
Oxford City	17	11	48	21	5	102
Vale of White Horse	40	13	60	2	4	119
South Oxfordshire	27	1	41	12	3	84
Cherwell	36	11	23	10	4	84
West Oxfordshire	43	26	27	13	4	113
Totals	163	62	199	58	20	502

The Affordable Warmth Network for Oxfordshire operates an associated Freephone helpline (0800 107 0044) available for any resident of Oxfordshire. This helpline acts as a referral hub and advice line, providing information on available grants, insulation, switching energy supplier, and other partner organisations who may be able to assist. As can be seen from the above table, just over 500 residents accessed this resource in the year 2012 – 13.

This table shows the nature of the call being received by the Affordable Warmth Helpline. Most calls were given general advice or signposted/referred. General advice often consisted of energy efficiency advice, often around insulation. Signposted/ referred callers were referred to schemes that were available to them, such as WHHP energy bill payment vouchers.



New Technology – Email, Internet search, articles (news items and blogs) on USEA’s website

Print – flyers and posters

Event – Outreach events

Media – Newspaper, Newsletter, Magazine (Council or Parish etc), Radio, TV

Undefined – Unknown

Referrals – Friend/neighbour

Builder

Fire service/home safety check

Warm Front

“Council”

The majority of calls from to the Affordable Warmth Helpline came from referrals, at over twice other sources of calls. The next largest source of calls came from print, increased in Q4 by the mail-outs that the local authorities undertook. Outgoing calls was the smallest source of calls with only 3%.



Outreach activity summary from the Network: Events, Training and Talks

1755 people, were spoken to at talks and at events and provided with advice about affordable warmth and the services we are able to provide as an organization or signpost to through the network. 7 training sessions took place throughout the year training 86 people about affordable warmth, spotting the signs of fuel poverty and how to take action to alleviate this. These training sessions also highlighted the detriment to health from living in a cold home.

Total number of talks provided: **16**

Total number of stand provided: **26**

Total number of people spoken to at talks/ stands: **1755**

Total number of training sessions provided: **7**

Total number of people attending training sessions: **86**



Warm Front – Number of Referrals from Oxon:

Local Authority	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Oxford City	9	10	8	11	38
Vale of White Horse	11	57	17	7	92
South Oxfordshire	7	53	14	8	82
Cherwell	9	98	35	9	151
West Oxfordshire	5	9	15	9	38
Total	41	227	89	44	400

It should be noted that the Warm Front scheme closed on 19th January 2013.

A total of 400 referrals were made throughout the year from Oxfordshire. Quarter 2, July to September, was the busiest quarter of the year for referrals, with over twice as many as any other quarter.

Cherwell was the local authority with the highest number of referrals, with nearly 60 more than the Vale of White Horse, which had the second highest number of referrals. The local authorities with the lowest number of referrals were Oxford City and West Oxfordshire.

Warm Front – Breakdown of Work Completed:

Local Authority	Replacement Boiler	CWI	Draught proofing	Gas Central Heating	Heating Repairs	Loft Insulation	Electric Storage Heaters	Tank Jackets	Totals
Oxford City	3	0	1	2	1	0	1	0	8
Vale of White Horse	11	1	1	2	1	2	2	0	20
South Oxfordshire	13	3	2	3	0	6	5	0	32
Cherwell	18	1	3	0	3	2	3	0	30
West Oxfordshire	8	0	2	2	3	0	0	0	15
Total	53	5	9	9	8	10	11	0	105



A total of 105 measures were completed throughout Oxfordshire over a year's period. The majority of these works were replacement boilers, few other measures were installed throughout the county with no tank jackets being fitted at all.

South Oxfordshire had the most amount of work completed with 32, closely followed by Cherwell with 30; Oxford City had the least work completed with only 8.

Combined Number of Measures and Households for insulation or heating repairs/replacements:

Local Authority/Organisation	Number of Households Installed	Number of Measures Installed
Oxford City	tbc	tbc
Vale of White Horse	0	0
South Oxfordshire	0	0
Cherwell	0	0
West Oxfordshire	0	0
United Sustainable Energy Agency	417	509
Warm Front	72 (calculated)	97
Totals	489	606

N.B. Number of households assisted by WarmFront has been calculated, assuming that each household takes an average of 1.22 measures (as was average for 2010-11)

USEA installed a significant number of measures through the Cocoon Free Insulation Scheme, 507 in total, benefiting 417 households. WarmFront installed 97 measures which is calculated to have benefited 417 households.

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