

Health Improvement Board Briefing - February 2015

Background

An interim report on the progress of the new Fuel Poverty outcome measure is given, in addition a brief outline on the work of the Affordable Warmth Network against the Action plan. The board is invited to feed back its views on the usefulness of the outcome and progress on the Action Plan.

Fuel Poverty in Oxfordshire

The fuel poverty indicator is based on a Low Income High Cost (LIHC) definition and is where a household is considered to be fuel poor because:

- they have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
- If they spent that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

The LIHC fuel poverty indicator for Oxfordshire is 8.7%, in England it is around 11% ([DECC 2013](#)). 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 provides the administrative work in supporting the work of AWN towards the Action Plan, as well as delivering the promotional element of Fuel Poverty. The key partners are the five Districts Councils, Oxfordshire County Council Public Health, Citizens Advice Bureau, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group with visiting membership from Age UK, Low Carbon Hubs and Oxford Brookes University.

The offer to Oxfordshire residents by the AWN includes

- Sourcing of Green Deal, ECO and CISCO funds to provide free or reduced cost loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, solid wall insulation, new boilers.
- Enforcement of measures in response to poor housing conditions to reduce Excess Cold and Damp and Mould in private sector housing
- Provision of grants and loans to home owners to tackle cold and damp in their homes
- 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 in accessing full benefit entitlements for people on a low income.
- Development of projects to improve communications between existing and new partners, such as health and social and health colleagues.

Oxfordshire's Fuel Poverty Outcome

The Fuel Poverty outcome was the number of "significant increases" in energy efficiency 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 (by at least £1200 per year).

This figure reported below is not complete but is offered as an interim report. There may also be some variation in how the measures are recorded and reported by different partners. It is anticipated that there will be full reporting by Autumn 2015.

The partners of the Affordable Warmth Network (AWN) have endeavoured to collect data in Quarters 1, 2 and 3. The breakdown of the figures that were provided in time are in Appendix 1 of this report.

Progress to date

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes a baseline target of 550 households being helped. This figure was selected as a conservative estimate of what might be possible. This interim report shows that there have been **1109 properties** in Oxfordshire who received significant increase in the energy efficiency of their homes, which should contribute to the reduction of fuel poverty levels in Oxfordshire. These improvements have included

- 249 physical improvements to homes.
- 860 benefits assessments, through which it is estimated that an additional £4.46 million of additional benefits were identified.
- 60 Green Deal assessments carried out, however no improvement measures have been taken up under that scheme.

There is a concern that there should not be a reliance on lifting people out of fuel poverty predominantly through increase in income (increase in benefits), because there are uncertainties over future fuel prices as well as great variation in the families own unique circumstances. Moreover, whilst the property remains inefficient in its production and retention of heat just having more disposable income to pay the bills will not be a sustainable solution. This means that measures which only address income are not a long term solution for alleviating the potential impacts on health or the environment.

A more sustainable solution for existing homes is that their energy efficiency is improved through building based measures, such as better insulation and having more efficient and effective heating systems. There has been little improvement in the limitations within Government's Green Deal and ECO offer available for Oxfordshire residents.

Action Plan and other project updates

Better Homes, Better Health

Work is underway between key partners of the AWN to develop a pilot project plan to target people who may be using primary and secondary health services, as a result of their homes being too cold or being difficult to heat. The idea is to build on evidence of a link between investing in warming a person's home and reducing the demand on health care services as well as other improvements and savings. A relatively moderate investment in the energy efficiency of a vulnerable resident's property can result in significant cost savings to the NHS. Kings Fund research identifies that a £1 investment, saves £70 over ten years.

Below is a summary of the activity which has been carried out in line with 2014/2015s Fuel Poverty Action Plan, besides the day to day activities of the partners who work on fuel poverty, for example benefits assessments, housing inspections, awarding of grants and loans and giving out of advice.

Progress against the Fuel Poverty Action Plan 2014/15

“Offers and resource”

Easy Save booklet and factsheet for residents

Free Cavity Wall and loft insulation

Solid wall insulation available on Green Deal

Four community group talks given

Switching Days

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

Ten Home Health Assessments offered to Oxfordshire residents

“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.

CAG network provided a good number of volunteer hours on Fuel Poverty related work.

“Community Engagement”

Oxford City working with Community Groups

Oxford City planning training with CAG for community groups to engage with residents better.

Two briefing sessions were delivered in the 2014 ‘SkillShare’ event for Community Action groups

“Communication and Promotion”

Switching days

Four Community Talks

Easy Save booklet and factsheet

Banners on Oxford Citys webpages

Editorial in The Volunteer

Winter Warmth Pharmacy campaign

A number of articles have been circulated to parish council newsletters, and news items/blogs available on

www.nef.org.uk/affordable-warmth-helpline

Advert in the South Stoke Newsletter Dec 2014; Advert in Barton Hans on News December 2014

Appendix 1: Health Improvement Partnership Board – Update from Oxon Affordable Warmth Network, Q1, Q2 and Q3

	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	2	3	TBC	23	39						67
# HHSRS Damp & Mould resolved	29	28	TBC	33	78						168
# HMO Licence conditions for EPC complied with					0						0
# Boilers installed	0	0	TBC	5	2		0		None, but 60 Green Deal reports completed.	Launching soon.	7
# More efficient heating system	0	0	TBC	1	0		0				1
# loft top ups							0				0
# double glazed windows	0	0	TBC	0	6		0				6
# Cavity Wall							0				0
# External Wall							0				0
# Uptake of benefit						655 £3,655,205*		205** £1,187,869*			860
* Annual amount of additional benefits claimed on behalf of eligible residents. ** Q1 and Q2 number, however Q1, 2 & 3 total benefit										Total	1109

