

REPORT TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

3rd April 2018

EXCESS WINTER DEATHS

Report Sponsor: Julia Burrows
Report Author: Julie Tolhurst
Received by SSDG: 21 November 2017
Date of Report: 21 March 2018

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide an update report and action plan for 2017/18 to tackle Excess Winter Deaths in Barnsley, given that a system wide co-ordinated planning and action is required by many agencies to address this agenda.
- 1.2 To agree recommendations for progressing the action plan for Excess Winter Deaths 2018/19. This includes details of targeted programmes to impact on excess winter deaths, fuel poverty and protecting vulnerable groups.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Health and Wellbeing Board members are asked to:-

- Note the content of the report, action plan and recommendations
- Provide any feedback
- Agree recommendations for progressing the action plan and communication of the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 More people in Barnsley die in the winter than in the summer, in line with the rest of England and other European counties.

Excess winter deaths are a statistical measure to quantify the effect of winter months for a given population. It can be expressed as the number of extra people who have died, or as an index comparing winter deaths to the number of deaths that occur at other times of the year.

It is possible for the apparent number of excess winter deaths to go down simply due to the number of deaths at other times of the year going up. The figures take no account of the age structure of the population, which makes comparison with other areas or the national average difficult. Comparing the

picture in Barnsley can be equally challenging, as the age structure of the population may change year on year.

3.2 There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating that death rates are higher in the winter months, and these deaths are largely due to predictable causes:

- Long term conditions: cold temperatures pose a particular risk to people living with long term cardio-vascular and respiratory conditions. These diseases reduce the body's ability to make the natural physiological responses required to keep warm and well in the cold.
- Thrombosis: cold temperatures increase blood pressure and the blood's tendency to clot, which is exacerbated by physical inactivity and causes heart attacks and strokes.
- Influenza and other viral infections: incidence of seasonal flu, respiratory syncytial virus and norovirus all peak in the winter months.
- Injuries: people of all ages are affected by increases in falls and road traffic accidents in the winter weather.
- Gender: higher EWDs amongst females compared to males, which could be explained by higher proportion of females aged over 85 compared to males.

Certain groups are most at risk:

- Older people, especially those living alone
- People with long term illnesses
- People with disabilities
- Households with low income, living in poor housing, or in rural areas
- Younger people who live alone
- People who are homeless

These risk factors are preventable through a range of measures including: home insulation and adequate heating; protective behaviours (adequate clothing, eating well, staying active); flu vaccination and alertness on the part of individuals and their caregivers to the increased risk of becoming unwell and seeking medical help early.

It is important to consider the impact of living in fuel poverty and the household heating bills in proportion to its income, in order to keep the indoor temperature at a health-protecting level alongside these risk factors.

4. Local picture

4.1 The latest data release has revealed that Excess Winter Deaths Index for Barnsley (3 year average 2013-2016, all person, all ages) is 24.3% (indicative number = 529), which is significantly higher compared to the Yorkshire average (17.8%) and England average (17.9%).

4.2 Most excess winter deaths in Barnsley occur in the 65-84 year age group. Given that the over 65 population of Barnsley is expected to increase by

17.2% between 2012 and 2020, it is reasonable to expect that the number of excess winter deaths will also increase substantially if action is not taken to address the root causes.

- 4.3 Flu & Pneumonia and respiratory diseases were the main underlying causes of excess winter deaths in Barnsley between 2008 and 2015.
- 4.4 There is no clear cut explanation as to why the Barnsley rate has increased and is highest in the Region for this period. Further analysis of Barnsley level data has shown that a number of indicators are significantly worse than national rates including healthy life expectancy, deaths from cardio-vascular disease & respiratory conditions (aged under 75 years), admissions to hospital from falls 65 years+, and re-ablement/ rehabilitation rates from hospital.
- 4.5 These figures mask the variation of EWDs across the borough. The next phase of data analysis will focus on smaller geographical areas linked to Area Councils to address specific issues.

5. EWDs action plan

- 5.1 A task and finish group involving representatives from Barnsley Council, Barnsley CCG and key partners, has produced a high level action plan outlining outcomes, key tasks and timescales to address the main contributory factors of EWDs.
- 5.2 Key themes include addressing cold homes & fuel poverty; uptake of flu vaccinations; falls prevention; winter planning & urgent care and awareness raising & communication plan.
- 5.3 Governance and performance management for each aim/section of the plan is via a number of channels including Early Help Adults group, Anti- poverty Steering group and Housing & Energy Board.

6. Conclusion/ Next Steps

- 5.1 To discuss the progression of the action plan 2017/18 and agree communication of the report.

7. Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no financial considerations at this time.

8. Consultation with stakeholders

- 8.1 The report and action plan have been drafted in consultation with colleagues from BMBC People, Place & Communities Directorates, Berneslai Homes, Barnsley CCG, South Yorkshire Housing Association and Voluntary & community sector partners.
- 8.2 The report has been discussed by Senior Strategic Development Group and approved for scheduling at Health & Wellbeing Board.

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – Excess Winter Deaths action plan 2017/18

Officer: Julie Tolhurst

Contact: 01226 774737

Date: 21st March 2018