

REPORT TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Thursday 3rd February 2022

AFFORDABLE WARMTH UPDATE

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of progress to establish a strategic approach to affordable warmth which is recognised as making an important contribution to health & wellbeing outcomes of residents, alongside the Councils aspirations to reduce emissions via Zero 40/45.

2. Recommendations

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

- note the importance of prioritising affordable warmth and impacts on resident's health & wellbeing to tackle health inequalities;
- note the position and achievements of the Affordable Warmth programme;
- acknowledge the outputs from the Warm Homes team and the transfer of this function into the Strategic Housing, Sustainability and Climate Change Team; and
- agree the development of an Affordable Warmth Strategy and the need to secure sustainable longer-term funding to support capital and revenue costs.

3. Delivering the [Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#)

- 3.1 The Affordable warmth programme contributes to each of the ambitions and outcomes for Starting Well, Living well and Ageing Well.

- 3.3 **Starting Well:** reducing fuel poverty will contribute to fewer children living in overall poverty and families having resources to look after themselves by paying fuel bills.

- 3.4 **Living Well:** the Affordable Warmth programme will directly contribute to everyone in Barnsley having access to a safe, warm and sustainable home to support their health and wellbeing.

3.5 **Ageing Well:** the Affordable Warmth programme will contribute to helping people remain healthy, active and independent in later life by improving the quality of existing mainstream housing stock and future-proof new homes.

4. **Reducing Health Inequalities**

4.1 Cold homes, cold-related illnesses, Excess Winter Deaths and housing in poor repair are the visible signs of fuel poverty and are impacting on many households in Barnsley, affecting the most vulnerable residents across the borough. Families on low incomes are living in cold, damp homes and older people are struggling to heat their homes in winter. With fuel prices continuing to rise, the issues are set to continue. There is a clear social gradient for fuel poverty: the lower your income, the more likely you are to be at risk of fuel poverty. (Marmot Review Team, 2011).

4.2 The delivery of an Affordable Warmth strategy and programme of works will help to tackle the wider health impacts of living in a cold home. An impact assessment will be conducted before and after works are completed to record outcomes for residents and this will be collated with health impact assessments from other fuel poverty initiatives to form a local evidence base for further investment to tackle cold homes.

5. Affordable Warmth Strategy

- 5.1 The “Sustainable Warmth – Protecting Vulnerable Households in England” strategy (Feb 2021) sets out the Government’s commitment to tackle fuel poverty and help the most vulnerable by increasing the energy efficiency of homes, reducing the cost of bills, contributing to Net Zero targets, and supporting low-income households in the transition to low carbon heating
- 5.2 In 2021, a Barnsley Affordable Warmth task force was established, chaired by the Service Director for Regeneration & Culture BMBC. The key purpose of the task force is to develop a strategic approach for Affordable Warmth, particularly targeting our most vulnerable, fuel poor communities living in all tenures across the borough.
- 5.3 An Affordable Warmth strategy 2022-2025 is in the early stages of being developed, in consultation with key partners, and aligned with the Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Barnsley 2030 ambitions and the Excess Winter Deaths Cold Weather Plan 2021-22.

6. Warm Homes Service

- 6.1 In 2019, BMBC secured grant funding from Affordable Warmth Solutions, alongside money from the Better Care Fund to develop a borough-wide Warm Homes Service, as a single point of access to offer support to residents living in, or at risk, of living in fuel poverty.
- 6.2 The team was established as part of the ABLE service in the Communities Directorate, and the grant funding was available to support the team until December 2021.
- 6.3 Up to the end of September 2021, the Warm Homes Service had achieved financial outcomes of £1.4M, with an average benefit of £1,640 per household. 1,593 residents benefitted from help and advice on how to keep their homes healthy and warm, with signposting to other services such as food banks.
- 6.4 On 4th January 2022, this function was transferred to the Strategic Housing, Sustainability and Climate Change Team and provides access to energy efficiency grant support, with signposting to income maximisation assistance if required.

7. Affordable Warmth Boiler scheme

- 7.1 The 3-year Affordable Warmth Programme was established in 2019 with an initial capital investment of £250,000. In February 2020, an additional

£150,000 was approved to be added due to the success of the scheme in the first 2 years of operation.

- 7.2 Four distinct work programmes were designed to link in with external sources of funding at that time and to introduce assistance to residents with long-term health conditions made worse by living in a cold home.
- 7.3 The original proposal was to carry out works to a minimum of 106 households, equating to an average capital spend per property of £2,358 over the three-year period. The actual number of households benefitting to date has been 213 with an average capital spend of £1,597.
- 7.4 The total value of works under the programme since April 2019 is £613,637 and a total of £273,460 of external funding has been accessed including any customer and landlord contributions.
- 7.5 The first 2 years of the programme have been independently evaluated by National Energy Action (NEA) who have reported that residents have felt demonstrable benefits to their health from upgraded or replacement heating systems or insulation installed. One resident, with depression, arthritis and COPD approached the Council when her heating broke down and told us that it was *“awful, absolutely awful. I wasn’t well and my symptoms were getting worse... I was staying in bed all the time with a hot water bottle”*. The Affordable Warmth Programme provided funding to install a new boiler and the resident’s feedback was *“I get up the morning, have a hot bath... my friends and family can see what difference it’s made to me... I’m over the moon to be honest”*.
- 7.6 Local Authority Delivery (LAD) funding has been obtained to fully fund insulation works to a total of 375 properties that are poorly energy efficient and have residents on low incomes. Two phases of this funding are currently in delivery and are due to be completed by June 2022.

8. Sustainable Warmth competition

- 8.1 The Sustainable Warmth competition was launched in June 2021 and offered local authorities the opportunity to bid for a share of £350M allocated to tackle fuel poverty by the installation of energy efficiency measures and low carbon heating. The programme is split in to 2 distinct strands:
 - Local Authority Delivery Phase 3 (LAD3); and
 - Home Upgrade Grant (HUG).
- 8.2 The bid proposal for the Council to access a portion of this funding was submitted to the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

(BEIS) on the 4th August 2021 and consists of 460 properties under LAD3 and 21 properties under HUG. The funding bid was successful and the full allocation of £5.3M has been awarded.

9. Household Support Grant

The team are currently offering grants of up to £500 to pay off energy debt and/ or provide a £140 credit to people's energy accounts to assist with the increased cost of keeping homes warm due to the energy price increases. Residents in receipt of Local Council Tax Support Allowance automatically qualify for the grant, however applications will also be considered for residents with a total household income of less than £30,000 pa. This grant is in huge demand and an element of this needs to be incorporated into the next Affordable Warmth programme to be offered as part of a package of assistance.

10. Contributing to Health and Wellbeing Board's key priorities

10.1 Improving outcomes for children and young people

Reducing fuel poverty will contribute to fewer children living in overall poverty and families having resources to look after themselves by paying fuel bills. Children that live in cold homes are more at risk of respiratory illness, low self-esteem and mental health problems. By improving the energy efficiency of homes, the potential health impacts of cold homes will be minimised.

10.2 Improving mental health in Barnsley.

Living in a cold, damp home has significant impacts on resident's mental health – such as anxiety and depression. There is strong evidence that improving housing conditions and energy efficiency directly improves mental health outcomes amongst householders.

11. Equality impact

An Equalities Impact Assessment for the key Affordable Warmth programmes has been completed with Equality and Inclusion Officers. In addition, a community engagement project was delivered in the Summer 2021 to understand the lived experience of vulnerable residents during the winter to inform our Excess Winter Deaths/ Cold Weather Plan and the development of an Affordable Warmth Strategy.

12. Tackling the impact of poverty

The delivery of an Affordable Warmth programme will tackle the impact of poverty relating to the rising heating costs and energy bills, by improving energy efficiency and signposting to income maximisation advice.

13. Conclusion/ Next Steps

Although several Affordable warmth programmes are in delivery, the next step is to develop an overarching strategy to define shared priorities and maximise opportunities as they arise. Funding for Affordable Warmth capital schemes is time limited, therefore there is a need to prioritise longer term sustainability to improve health & wellbeing outcomes for residents. This work links to the development of route maps for zero40/45 to reduce emissions and promote low carbon/renewable energy solutions.

14. Financial Implications

- 14.1 Consultations have taken place with BMBC representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer) to accept the capital grant funding for the Sustainable Warmth Programme and the creation of new posts to deliver the scheme.
- 14.2 There is an urgent priority to secure sustainable longer-term funding for Affordable Warmth across the borough. The current council capital that funds this scheme ends in March 2022 and there is no external funding currently available. Works to heating system has been included under DFG grants for several years now and the majority of people benefitting from the Affordable Warmth programme to date have a long-term health condition made worse by living in a cold home. The potential to access Better Care funding to continue to provide this preventative support on an on-going basis needs to be examined in detail.

15 Consultation with stakeholders

- 15.1 Consultation for the Affordable Warmth programme of works has taken place with colleagues in BMBC Legal, Finance, Procurement, the Able service and Berneslai Homes. The consultation extended to partners of the Financial Resilience Sub-Group.
- 15.2 Consultation for the EWDs/Cold Weather Plan which includes the Affordable warm programme, has taken place with members of the Cold Weather Collaborative group including Barnsley CCG, SWYPHT, CVS, Barnsley hospital, Berneslai Homes, and SY Fire Service.
- 15.3 A community engagement exercise was delivered in the Summer 2021 to understand the lived experience of vulnerable residents during the winter to inform our Excess Winter Deaths/ Cold Weather Plan and the development of an Affordable Warmth Strategy.

16. Appendices

16.1 Appendix 1 – Affordable Warmth presentation

Officer:

Date: