

REPORT TO THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

4th February 2021

Tackling Excess Winter Deaths and cold related illnesses in Barnsley 2018-2021

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 Provide members with an update on progress against the aims and objective of the Tackling Excess Winter Deaths and cold related illnesses in Barnsley 2018-2021
- 1.2 Inform members about the national recommendations and support available locally
- 1.3 Support a review of the plan and strategy to address excess winter deaths going forward

2. Delivering the Health & Wellbeing Strategy

2.1 Whilst it is acknowledged that the current strategy is under review, this is an area of work that has a significant impact on addressing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Health and Wellbeing Board members are asked to:-
- Note review of 2018-2021 plan and recognise the work done to date to address excess winter deaths in Barnsley
 - Raise awareness of current guidance and support locally to address EWD this winter and beyond
 - Support a review of the plan going forward in to 2021, taking account of evidence from COVID-19 pandemic and the zero-carbon commitment

4. Introduction/ Background

4.1 Excess Winter Deaths

4.1.1 Excess Winter Deaths (EWD) is a statistical measure used 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. Although the main underlying causes

of EWDs are respiratory or cardiovascular diseases, England and Wales have higher rates than other European countries with colder climates and therefore many EWD are considered to be preventable¹

4.1.2 EWDs represent an important health inequality and those in greater socioeconomic deprivation are more likely to be affected. There are a number of complex and interlinked factors that contribute to excess winter deaths and cold related harm ². These include:

- housing and economic factors (household income, cost of fuel and energy efficiency of the home)
- seasonal factors (including temperature, physical hazards such as snow and ice and circulating infectious diseases, particularly flu)
- individual vulnerability to health effects of cold (see below for more detail)
- attitudes to cold and associated behaviours

4.1.3 A wide range of people are vulnerable to the cold, and many overlap with those at risk from COVID-19)^{3,4,5}: These include:

- households with young children (from new-born to school age)
- older people (especially those over 65 years old and those who are frail or socially isolated)
- people with pre-existing chronic medical conditions (especially cardiovascular and respiratory conditions- in particular, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and childhood asthma)
- people living in deprived circumstances, particularly on a low income or in fuel poverty
- people with cognitive impairment, mental health conditions or learning difficulties
- pregnant women
- people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping
- people who have attended hospital due to a fall
- people with addictions
- Recent immigrants and asylum seekers

¹https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/search/excess%20winter%20death#page/6/gid/1/pat/6/par/E12000004/ati/302/are/E06000015/iid/90360/age/1/sex/4/cid/4/page-options/ovw-do-0_car-do-0

² <https://www.khub.net/documents/135939561/174090228/Excess+winter+deaths+-+information+for+local+authorities+2017+to+2018.pptx/b6b625a0-1818-a6f0-94e6-ecd457ab60c0?t=1571413005990>

³ <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/11/11/health-matters-cold-weather-and-COVID-19/>

⁴ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6/chapter/What-is-this-guideline-about>

⁵https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/770963/data_sources_to_support_local_services_tackling_health_risks_of_cold_homes.pdf

4.2 Barnsley's plan

4.2.1 In 2018 stakeholders from across Barnsley came together to devise a plan to address excess winter morbidity and mortality in Barnsley and produced a comprehensive plan to be delivered with partners over the next three years, *Tackling Excess Winter Deaths and cold related illnesses in Barnsley 2018-2021*, which can be found in appendix 1. This collaborative cross sector plan that was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board as our strategy for 2018-21.

4.2.2 The plan was based on national guidance that sets out the responsibilities for tackling excess winter deaths and cold related mortality at a sector level including:

- [National cold weather plan -
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cold-weather-plan-cwp-for-england](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cold-weather-plan-cwp-for-england)
- [Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes - https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6)
- [How to reduce the risk of seasonal excess deaths systematically in vulnerable older people to impact at population level -
https://lpbcc.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/ref-11-seasonal-access-deaths.pdf](https://lpbcc.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/ref-11-seasonal-access-deaths.pdf)
- [Falls in older people: assessing risk and prevention -
https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG161](https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/CG161)

4.3 COVID-19

4.3.1 In 2020/21 the focus on tackling EWD is becoming increasingly more urgent. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic on 11th November PHE presented evidence about the links between [cold weather and COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-cold-weather-and-covid-19/health-matters-cold-weather-and-covid-19) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-cold-weather-and-covid-19/health-matters-cold-weather-and-covid-19> and accompanying guidance on how to address the issues through their Health Matters series.

4.3.2 There is a concern that COVID-19 will amplify the impact of cold weather this winter through increased exposure to cold temperatures, shared risk factors among population subgroups affected by COVID-19 and cold weather, clinical impacts, social isolation and system level risks. This interaction between COVID-19 and cold weather has the potential to have a huge impact on health and social care if preventative actions aren't taken, and local authorities have a key role in preventing cold related harm.

4.4 Zero Carbon

4.4.1 Since this plan was developed Barnsley has declared a Climate Emergency⁶ and has an ambitious target for the Borough to be zero carbon by 2040. Actions

⁶ <https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57611/ZERO%2040.pdf>

taken to address climate change will have a beneficial impact on reducing excess winter deaths, particularly around retrofitting existing houses⁷. In Barnsley, 39% of all CO2 emissions are from domestic properties which contributes to the health harming effects of climate change.

4.4.2 The recent private sector housing stock condition survey commissioned by Barnsley Council estimated that there are 80,000 homes across all sectors that need upgrading to EPC C by 2035 to meet national government targets⁸. Of these 39,889 are classed as low-income households in Barnsley, and 71% of these live in homes below EPC C (households with lower EPC standards are at greater risk of fuel poverty where they mix with low income the issue becomes particularly acute). This means that in Barnsley an estimated 28,441 low-income households are potentially living in fuel poverty with the associated impacts on inequalities and health and wellbeing. The health impact assessment of poor housing conditions is due to be finalised in the next few months and will be used to inform the next plan going forward.

5. Excess Winter Deaths in Barnsley

Overarching target for Excess Winter Deaths (Barnsley Council corporate indicator) Reduce EWD's to at least 15% by 2020

5.1 Current position

- Barnsley's 2018-2019 excess winter deaths rate (17.7%) is not significantly different to the England rate of 15.1%. When compared to nearest neighbours, Barnsley's rate is the joint 6th highest.
- The most recent rate of 17.7% is less than half what it was in the previous two time points (2016-2017 and 2017-2018).
- During 2012–2019, there were 75.5% more deaths from influenza and pneumonia in winter months than in non-winter months.
- Large geographical differences exist within Barnsley. During the period 2012–2019, rates of excess winter deaths ranged from 8.5% in Old Town ward to 53.9% in Darton East ward.

5.2 Considerations going forward

5.2.1 The Excess Winter Deaths Index is now reported as a single year measure on the Public Health Outcomes Framework (PHOF) to align with the ONS Annual Births and Mortality Extracts. This data used to be reported as a 3-year average to account for year-on-year variation.

⁷ <https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s71035/Appendix%201.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/clean-growth-strategy>

5.2.2 The EWD Index is calculated by comparing the winter months of December to March with the non-winter period as August to November of that same year, and April to July of the following year. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a large increase of deaths mostly in the non-winter months of April to July. This will impact on the measure of EWD due to relying on this difference between deaths occurring in the winter and the average of the non-winter months. It is likely that COVID-19 deaths will push the excess down by raising the spring baseline for deaths. To account for this and provide a measure of impact, the ONS will calculate excess mortality using deaths including and excluding COVID-19 separately⁹.

5.2.3 To give an example, provisional data for 2019/20 for England shows that when using deaths data including COVID-19 there were an estimated 8,700 EWDs during the 2019 to 2020 winter. This is the lowest number recorded since the data time series began in 1950 to 1951. However, the low estimate is explained by the comparison with the large number of COVID-19 deaths that occurred mainly in the non-winter months April to July, rather than an exceptionally low number of winter deaths. When using deaths data excluding COVID-19, in the 2019 to 2020 winter period (December 2019 to March 2020), there were an estimated 28,300 EWD in England and Wales. This was 19.6% higher than the 23,670 observed in the 2018 to 2019 winter period but lower than the 2016 to 2017 and 2017 to 2018 winters. Data for the 2019/20 period for Local Authorities is not expected until November 2021.

6 Key achievements

6.1 Cold homes & energy efficiency

- Work to address cold homes includes capital funding to install gas central heating private sector housing through Better Homes Barnsley. Since 2015 736 properties have been improved and over £1.8 million of funding has been secured. This includes £250k council capital used to fund affordable warmth programme and boilers on prescription which have led directly to health improvements
- A dedicated winter health communication campaign aimed at the public frontline workers and a programme of fuel poverty training which has trained over 350 staff.
- Warm Homes team single point of access for cold homes which is funded until December 2021. Over 742 families supported since April 2019 and over 1,200 onward referrals made.
- Dedicated project to address fuel poverty and social isolation funded through North Area Council and delivered by DIAL.

⁹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/excesswintermortalityinenglandandwales/previousReleases>

- A sector wide task and finish group has been convened to review how Barnsley is able to respond to the challenge of addressing fuel poverty, housing conditions and carbon emissions.
- Additional funding is expected from government during 2021 to improve insulation in the least energy efficient housing

6.2 Falls prevention

- There have been several multi-stakeholder workshops that have identified gaps in service provision and future pathways.
- The South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue service has been commissioned to provide Safe and Well Checks across Barnsley. The checks include asking key questions related to falls and cold homes and then referring on to appropriate services.
- The council and NHS partners have developed social media campaigns to raise awareness that falls are preventable [BMBC Falls Prevention webpage - https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/health-and-wellbeing/healthy-living/falls-prevention/](https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/health-and-wellbeing/healthy-living/falls-prevention/)
- During the COVID-19 pandemic BMBC, NHS services and third sector organisations have worked together to distribute 5000 Public Health England Physical Activity booklets and 4000 Fall-Proof falls prevention exercise booklets to older people in Barnsley (see Appendix 2).
- Over the past few years many local area councils have held successful Sloppy Slipper events. Helping to raise awareness of falls prevention, along with providing residents with new slippers.
- The Active in Barnsley Partnership have developed the *Whats Your Move campaign* and will soon be launching a website encouraging and supporting the people of Barnsley to increase their physical activity. It will have a specific section for older people and falls prevention.
- The next steps are consult on the frailty prevention strategy which takes a life course approach and uses strength-based principles, illustrated as a rainbow diagram (see Appendix 3). This is being developed to reflect the impact COVID-19 has had on the people of Barnsley. We know that many of our older population have developed reduced mental capacity and become physically deconditioned due to the nature of lockdown restrictions. This has the potential to lead to an increase in our frail population resulting in greater burden on our Health and Social Care Services.

6.3 Flu vaccination uptake

6.3.1 Flu vaccine uptake nationally is currently at 80.5% in people aged 65 years + which is the highest uptake ever achieved. In Barnsley we're currently at over 82% in this group. Uptake in 2 and 3 year children is also the highest ever recorded nationally and continues to climb. For those in at-risk groups uptake is over 51% and

higher than the same time in the last seven seasons. For pregnant women uptake is higher than the same time last season.

6.3.2 Current flu vaccine uptake figures to weeks ending 10th Jan 2021:

- 65 and Over - CCG average currently 82.3% - currently above national average (80.4%) but just below regional average (82.7%).
- At risk 6 months to under 65 - CCG average 56.6% - currently above both national average (51.6%) and regional average (54.1%)
- At risk 16 years to under 65 - CCG average 56.3% - currently above both national average (52.4%) and regional average (54.2%)
- Pregnant Woman (all) - CCG average 49.6% - currently above both national average (43.1%) and regional average (47.1%)
- Carers - CCG average 50.1% - currently above both national average (44.9%) and regional average (44.1%)
- Children aged 2 - CCG average 54.3% - currently just above both the national (54.1%) and regional (53.5%) averages
- Children aged 3 - CCG average 58.4% - we continue to be above both the national (56.6%) and regional (56.2%) averages

6.4 Current support available

6.4.1 Throughout 20/2021 BMBC and partners have been working to address the causes of excess winter deaths, by raising awareness of what can cause ill health in winter and encouraging behaviour change through a joined-up communications campaign. This includes an eight-page A5 leaflet which can be downloaded by visiting <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/ready-for-winter/stay-well-this-winter/> and sharing content on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) using #WarmAndWell for posts around winter health. Local information has supported national campaigns, such as International Day of Older People, Safeguarding Awareness Week, Fuel Poverty Awareness Day and Falls Prevention Week.

6.4.2 A toolkit has been created for frontline staff at BMBC and partner organisations, to provide accurate information for conversations around winter health and signpost to local support services.

6.4.3 Communications around flu, falls prevention and warm homes has been shared through key council internal and external channels, and the channels of partners, including Berneslai Homes, the CCG, Barnsley Hospital and more.

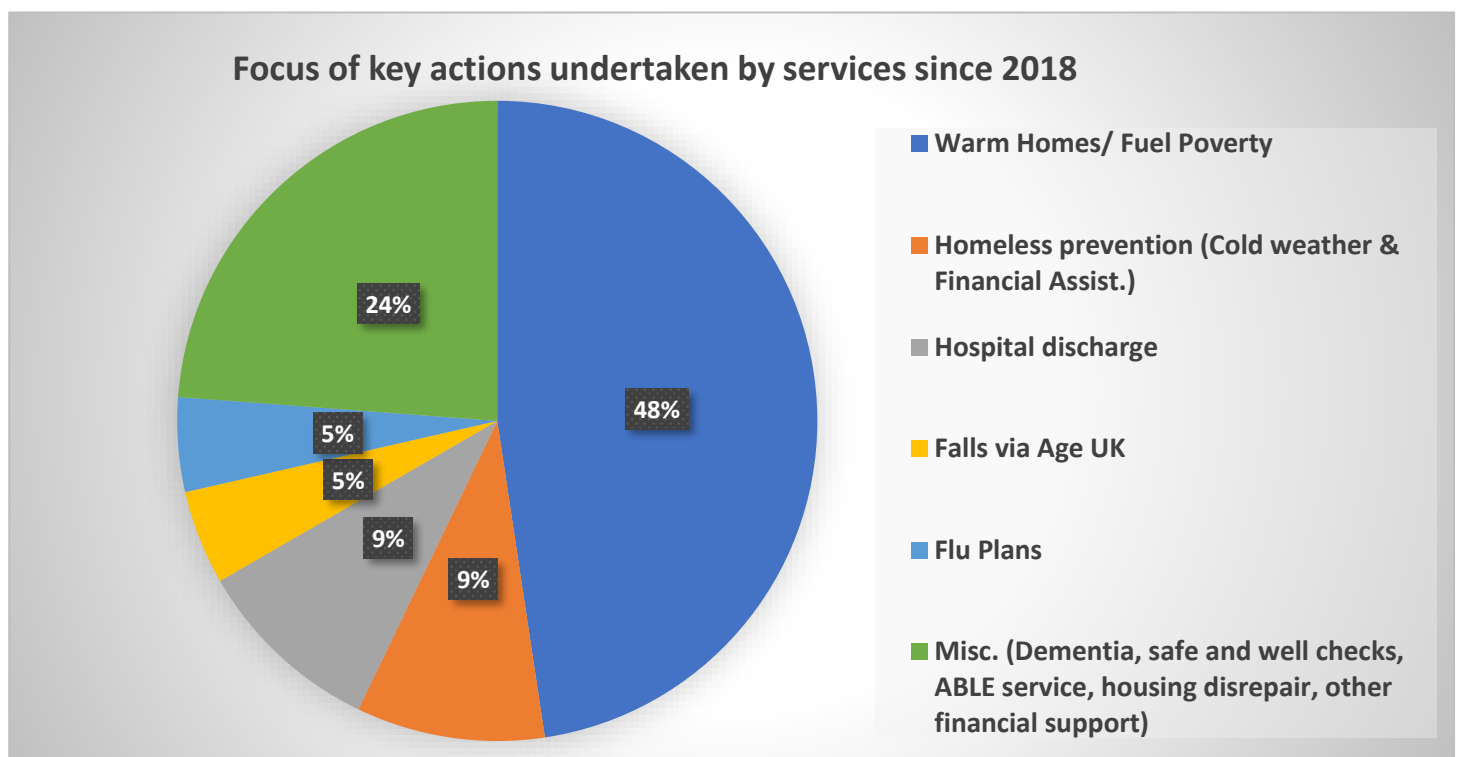
7 Stakeholder survey

7.1 In December 2020 and January 2021, an online survey was sent out to over 100 stakeholders from across the Borough. The aim was to review the actions taken within the last few years (2018 to date) across all relevant sectors of the borough to

tackle cold weather-related harm and EWDs. The actions being reviewed were taken from Barnsley's EWD reduction plan. As well as being included in this review, the responses aimed to map the support currently available, review the plan in light of the impact of COVID-19 and provide a steer on the focus of the next plan in 2021.

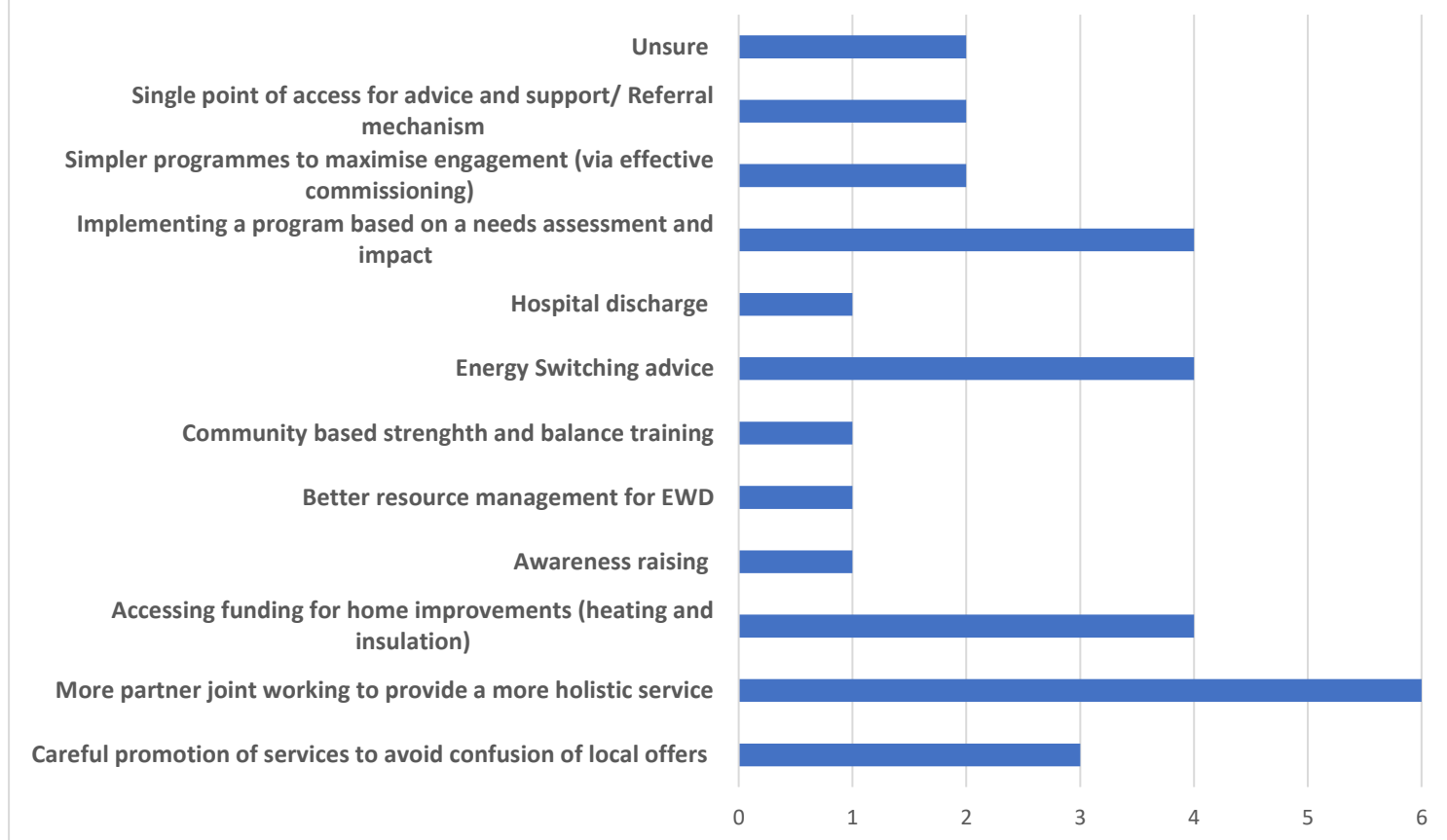
7.2 This initial consultation with stakeholders has provided some useful feedback to progress wider engagement. It is therefore recommended that a more thorough review be conducted in summer 2021 to complete a more detailed, in-depth report with stakeholders to be brought back to the Health and Wellbeing Board for approval.

7.3 The survey showed that some progress has been made against each of the priorities set out in the 2018-21 plan. The pie chart below shows a similar response, the greatest focus around cold homes and fuel poverty, however this could be due to the types of organisations that responded to the survey. More details on the specific actions taken can be seen in appendix 4.



7.4 The survey showed that there is some support for each of the priorities, however some respondents felt that some of the priorities were not as important. This suggests that the focus of the plan and the actions taken to address EWD need to be reviewed for the next plan. The chart below shows the main themes that were suggested for the focus of the plan going forward. More detail can be found in appendix 4.

Potential areas of focus for next EWD plan beyond 2021



8. Conclusion and next steps

8.1 Barnsley has made some progress to address the underlying causes of excess winter deaths since the plan was agreed in 2018. This now needs to be reviewed in more detail and consideration given to addressing this important issue post 2021 using the findings of the stakeholder survey and further consultation with those communities at risk of cold related morbidity and mortality

8.2 Given the dual pressures of cold weather and COVID-19 this winter it is important to continue a focus on promoting the support available to public and ensuring agencies and stakeholders are aware of their responsibilities in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of Barnsley residents.

8.3 In light of current pressures and events, it is recommended that there be a more detailed discussion about how excess winter deaths can be addressed in Barnsley over summer 2021. This should include evaluating the focus of the needs to be reviewed for 2021-2024 taking in to account:

- Strategically where this sits with priorities in Barnsley going forward (to include COVID-19, poverty, zero carbon 2040/45, emergency planning and Barnsley 2030).

- Whether there needs to continue to be a discrete, standalone plan, or merge into wider pieces of work
- Conduct a review of targets and statistical measurement taking into consideration the change in excess winter deaths and current work into poverty and COVID-19 impacts being undertaken in the Borough
- The governance arrangements, including reviewing membership of the excess winter death communication and working groups

9. Financial Implications

9.1 There is a considerable risk that a key pillar of Barnsley's response to fuel poverty and excess winter deaths will not be continued once the current funding from Affordable Warmth Solution's Warm Homes Fund ends in December 2021. Additional funding is also needed to continue the affordable warmth programme as there is no other scheme to address boiler replacements in the Borough. It is therefore recommended that there is an urgent need to review the scope of the service and consider options for future funding.

10. Consultation with stakeholders

10.1 Initial consultation with stakeholders has already taken place with a smart survey sent out to stakeholders in December and January 2020/21. It is envisaged that further stakeholder engagement (including with those communities most at risk) be undertaken over summer 2021 to inform future plans.

11. Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Tackling Excess Winter Deaths and cold related illnesses in Barnsley 2018-2021
- Appendix 2- Fall Proof Barnsley Booklet
- Appendix 3- Frailty Prevention Rainbow
- Appendix 4- Stakeholder EWD survey

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