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Warm Homes, Healthy People

Second Year Evaluation Report

2013



1: Introduction:

1.1: As in the previous winter, the funding received through the Warm Homes, Healthy People grant was matched with donations to Cumbria Community Foundation's Winter Warmth fund and was targeted at people struggling to meet the cost of keeping warm through the winter and spring of 2012/13.

1.2: The support was delivered through two strands, the Winter Warmth grant, managed by Cumbria Community Foundation both directly and via block grants to partner organisations; and the Hot Spots scheme, administered by Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency. In general grants made through the Winter Warmth Fund has been used to pay large fuel bills, though occasionally it may be used to purchase other means of keeping warm, such as bedding. In addition the Fund made grants to eleven groups totalling £72,744. These grants supported practical activities and support to people experiencing fuel poverty. The Hotspots scheme pays for repairs to boilers and heating systems and the cost of heating maintenance contracts.

1.3: Eligibility for support from both schemes is based on a person having a restricted income (based on receipt of various benefits) and being particularly vulnerable to the effects of cold weather, including older people, people with disabilities and life-limiting health conditions, or families with young children. Funding from the Winter Warmth Fund was restricted solely to older people.

2: Summary of Activity:

2.1: WINTER WARMTH FUND:

- Total grants to groups made 11
- Total value of group grants £72,744
- Total grants to individuals 558
- Average grant value - £160
- Total value of all grants awarded - £90,000

Older people were able to access the winter warmth grant either directly from Cumbria Community Foundation, or through one of the partner organisations such as the various Age UK groups around the county. Therefore it is difficult to trace exactly which other organisations, such as councils, G.P.s etc., have been making referrals into the scheme. However, as last year, it is estimated that many of the referrals will have been self-referrals as a result of leaflets and advertising.

2.2: HOTSPOTS

- Total repairs carried out . 125
- Total referrals to other organisations . 81
- Average cost of repairs - £1,354
- Total value of all grants awarded - £169,300

access into the Hot Spots scheme, it is possible to make a more accurate assessment of which organisations were making referrals and, also, where clients were being referred onto for additional or alternative help.

Referral statistics show that self-referrals in response to newspaper advertising and leaflets is significant. There is a good spread of referrals from various organisations such as local councils, Children's Centres and Age UK groups, as well as good geographic spread around the county. However, the organisation with the single biggest number of referrals was Carlisle Home Improvement Agency (36 referrals in total).

Onward referrals were made mainly to Age UK groups and Children's Centres, but with a significant number (17) being made to Cosyseal Insulation, an approved Green Deal organisation.

3: Analysis of Evaluation Data:

3.1: This analysis is based on the results from telephone interviews carried out by CREA on behalf of the project. The survey consisted of 23 calls to people who had received assistance through Hot Spots, delivered by CREA, and 47 people who had received a Winter Warmth grant from Cumbria Community Foundation. In addition to asking clients a range of questions about the outcomes of the support they had received through the schemes, they were also asked if they were willing to participate in a case study interview. A selection of these case studies is included in this report at section 4.

3.2: Results of Hot Spots Survey:

Support received:

- 23 had received support through Hot Spots to replace or repair boilers and other parts of heating systems, and boiler service contracts. Of these, 4 *reported* also receiving the Winter Warmth grant though it is possible that there was a greater incidence of people receiving assistance from both schemes (which is within the rules of the overall scheme.)
- 7 reported receiving a home energy assessment . all of these had led to further actions including improved loft and wall insulation, fitting of draught excluders and radiator heat reflectors. One respondent specifically mentioned having received advice on the Green Deal.
- Of those who said they had not received a home energy assessment, only 1 specifically said that they had not been offered the service and would have been interested.

Profile of Clients:

- 38% stated that they or a partner were disabled and/or seriously ill.
- In every case, lack of sufficient money was the reason the clients had accessed the assistance. 30% of respondents made specific statements that they would have had to go into debt to meet the costs of bills, whether for fuel, cost of repairs or cost

that they would have had to borrow money from family

- The remainder stated that they would have simply continued to live with inadequate heating.
- As last year, the lack of hot water due to broken or inefficient boilers, was as much of a problem as lack of warmth . this has implications for health and hygiene as clients stated they could not bathe or wash clothes.
- Damp and draughts are major contributors to inadequate home temperatures . 26% of respondents reported requiring additional help to replace or repair draughty doors and windows.
- Age was not asked in the interview as this data is recorded elsewhere . however, it was clear that the majority were older people. One respondent was clearly the mother of a young family.

Other Points:

- In three cases, the heating system was in a condemned or potentially lethal condition, so the repairs and replacements carried out may have prevented future serious health problems due to fumes, fires and, in one case, potential explosion!
- All respondents reported finding the application process very easy and the response time very quick. The service experienced was reported to be excellent. The only improvement suggested was the need for more publicity so that more people can benefit.
- However, given the range of sources from which people had found out about the scheme, it would appear that the publicity has been successful in reaching both individuals and referral agencies. Whilst Age UK was the most quoted source of information about the scheme, other sources included leaflets picked up at the GP surgery, press adverts, the council, friends, social services, Eden carers, the Benefits Office, and an occupational therapist.
- 10 of the respondents agreed to be contacted re the possibility of a more in depth interview.

3.3: Results of the Winter Warmth Grants Survey:

Support Received:

- 43 reported receiving the Winter Warmth Grant on its own; 1 reported having boiler repairs undertaken: 1 reported that a complete new heating system had been installed. Both of these cases indicate support under the Hot Spots scheme.
- In all cases where the Winter Warmth grant had been received, with one exception, the grant had been used to cover fuel costs . either to pay a fuel bill or to purchase additional fuel in the case of people relying on coal. The one exception was the mother of a young family, just moved into a new house, who used the grant to purchase warm bedding for the children.
- 27% of clients had also received a home energy assessment . in all cases except 2, this had resulted in a range of improvements being made including loft and wall insulation, reflective strips behind radiators, fitting of low energy light bulbs, draught

- c. In the 2 cases where the assessment did not lead to a grant, the client reported that the home was already fully insulated. 1 client reported that she did not want an assessment because her home is listed and therefore she is very restricted in terms of the improvements she can make. Another client said that she had not had an assessment but would be interested in having one to see how she can save money on her energy bills.
- Among other outcomes that had resulted from the scheme, clients reported the fitting of hand rails, being given a Blue Badge and other disability assistance.

Profile of Clients:

- 60% of respondents stated that they or another member of their household (partner/child) were disabled and/or seriously ill/recovering from surgery. As with the Hot Spot respondents many were clearly elderly (Two gave their ages . 98 and 93, respectively) and it may be assumed that, even where not specifically reported, many of the clients have a degree of mobility impairment.
- In every case, lack of sufficient money to pay bills was the reason for accessing the grant. 29% stated that they would have borrowed money/gone into debt to pay their bills with the remainder stating that they would have to or had already turned the heating down or off completely. Of these 20% stated that the cold temperature of their home was making their disability or health condition worse. 2 reported that they had to spend most of their time in bed to keep warm.
- As with the Hot Spots respondents, damp and draughts continue to be major contributors to cold homes . 22% stated that they needed new windows and/or doors, with others requiring draught-proofing, damp proofing, or additional wall/loft insulation.

Other Points:

- All reported that application process was easy and expressed a high level of satisfaction with the scheme overall. The only potential improvement suggested was more publicity. However, as with Hot Spots, people had found out about the scheme from a wide range of sources including GP surgeries, occupational health therapists, local council, Age UK, Children's Centres, newspaper adverts, friends, leaflets, and the British Legion. This would suggest that current publicity is fairly comprehensive.
- 53% of the respondents expressed a willingness to consider being interviewed for a case study.

4: Group Grants:

In the first year of the Warm Homes, Healthy People programme, the decision was made to use some of the Winter Warmth funding to make grants to community organisations, specifically those in the front line of assisting the key target beneficiaries of the programme, including older people and those experiencing fuel poverty.

This proved to be an extremely effected way of reaching directly to vulnerable people and adding to the support available to them. Of the eleven group receiving grants in 2012/13,



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previous year. Cumbria Gateway was a new partner in

In the main, the groups used the grant to sustain, further develop and/or build on services delivered the previous winter:

- Northern Fells Group . supporting their volunteer-led Lend A Hand scheme, which tailors support to the needs of vulnerable older people in rural communities. Support provided includes access to exercise classes, respite for carers, loans of medical equipment, small repairs and house maintenance jobs. The focus of the group is to support older people to live more independent, less socially isolated lives. National statistics show that social isolation is a significant contributor to excess winter mortality rates.
- Age UK Carlisle and Eden . distributed winter warmth packs, provided advice on keeping warm, eating healthily, energy efficiency measures such as draught-proofing, and help to ensure people access their full financial benefits.
- Age UK West Cumbria . engaged worker to provide direct support to older people including advice on energy-efficiency measures, keeping warm, accessing benefits etc. and using this to create the foundations for a fully comprehensive Winter Well-being Project for winter 2013/14.
- Grizebeck Village Hall . to sustain the services of the village hall and enable vulnerable people to access inexpensive hot meals, access to activities and advice, thereby tackling issues of social isolation in a rural area.
- CAB Allerdale . providing budgeting and money management advice to vulnerable clients, including ensuring that clients are on the most appropriate fuel tariffs.
- Cumbria Rural CAB . supporting people in rural areas, especially those with very young families, with advice on fuel poverty, hard-to-heat homes, budget management and accessing appropriate benefit entitlements.
- Copeland CAB . money management and benefit advice, including help to identify the most appropriate energy tariff and how to swap energy suppliers/use supplier comparison sites; also access to energy monitors so that they better manage their energy usage.
- Project John . this is a specialist accommodation provider for young homeless people in Barrow. The grant was used to replicate last year's support, helping to pay for gas, warm clothing and providing healthy eating classes to give tenants the skills to eat well on a low budget, included using less fuel-intensive cooking methods.
- ACT . training Energy Champions to work with the national Energy Champions Toolkit and to establish a Cumbria network of Energy Champions . volunteers who can provide energy-efficiency advice in their communities with the objective of alleviating fuel poverty and promoting affordable warmth.
- CREA . grant was to pilot an energy assessment service more attractive to older people than the Green Deal.
- Cumbria Gateway . grant was used towards the electricity costs of running the drop-in centre for the homeless in Carlisle, provide cooked breakfasts for 25 people one morning every week, soup on a Saturday night, plus warm drinks at other times, and sleeping bags to those who needed them.

Individual Case Studies:

June, aged 71, Dalton in Furness.

Heading for her second winter without heating, June thought she needed a miracle to keep her warm. She has Osteoarthritis and Lupus and struggles to keep warm and pain free. She was keeping on top of her rising electricity and gas bills but could not afford to fix her broken boiler. The Hot Spots scheme fixed the boiler.

"I am very, very grateful. I wouldn't have survived the winter without the help."

Valerie, 62, Carlisle.

Valerie rarely leaves her upstairs flat as the circulation is going in her legs. She has Lymphodema and Diabetes.

"The pump had gone on the back boiler behind the fire and I couldn't afford to fix it. I could still use the fire but I had no central heating for 12 months. I managed to keep the sitting room warm with just the fire and I wore lots of extra layers. The boiler was fixed just before we had the snow at Easter. I think it is great that the help is there. This winter I will be comfortable. It takes away the worry."

Doris, 62, Frizington.

A heating specialist told Doris in November that it would be four months before he could fix her boiler. He advised her that it would cost £3,000 and that she needed new radiators throughout the house.

"We had no hot water or central heating for three weeks and had no idea how we could raise three thousand pounds to do the work. We spoke to a nice man from Hot Spots and he sent someone out to fix the boiler. We didn't need new radiators. We are very grateful."

Jean, 68, Shap.

Most people couldn't contemplate living with no electricity and cooking all their meals on a camping stove. For one woman in Shap, that is her daily grind, come hail or shine. Add Multiple Sclerosis, Arthritis and a Gluten Intolerance in the mix and you get an idea of what Jean is up against.

"I don't know how the hell I survived last winter, I was robbing Peter to pay Paul. I am in debt and ran up even more buying gas and paraffin to keep warm. I hope we don't have another winter like last winter, I can only afford to run one bar on the heater. My cooker blew up and I can't afford to replace it. The Winter Warmth Fund Grant really helped."

David struggles to get around the house and his wife is also his carer. The Winter Warmth Fund Grant took a little bit of pressure off their stretched finances.

“It made a lot of difference, we weren’t scratting about for money for meters. Both the gas and the electric are on a meter. We’ve got an electric fire but we never use it - just the radiators that work off the combi boiler. We just wrap up, put on an extra cardigan, and a little bit of extra heating in the winter.”

Jan, 62, Workington.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) means that Jan can’t walk far and can’t climb stairs. The British Lung Foundation recommends that people with COPD have the same temperature in their home all year round as a variation in temperature aggravates the problem.

“I am always playing catch up with the gas bill. I pay by Direct Debit but there is still more to pay each time. The Winter Warmth Fund Grant meant I could leave the heating on more and that definitely helped me.”

Don, 62, Barrow.

Living without heating for a fortnight over Christmas when their boiler went, gave Don and his wife a taste of just how cold their council house could get. Thankfully the council fixed the problem and lent them an electric fan heater until the central heating could go back on. They had to go to their daughter’s house for a bath and relied on family kindness to get them through.

“The Winter Warmth Fund Grant helped us a great lot. We have gas central heating and a gas fire which costs £20 a week to run through the meter. We never try to heat the whole house. Applying for help was simple, we filled in the application form, said how much our income was and it was as straightforward as that. We put the form in and a cheque came within a week. We weren’t old enough to get the Government help, so we were lucky to get the grant.”

Irene, 70, Barrow.

An end of terrace house isn’t easy to heat, especially when the bedrooms and sitting room have no radiators. Emphesema and COPD isn’t a good combination in a house which is like an ice box. The Winter Warmth Fund Grant meant Irene could leave here heating on for an hour or so longer.

“I’d put the gas fire on to keep warm, or have a hot bath. I think it is worth doing the grants for people who really need it. I hate asking, but I have pretty big gas bills. I really think it is lovely, it is nice to get a bit of help. Cumbria Community Foundation does a good job.”

The hike in the price of gas saw Mary's gas bills double and she couldn't afford the bills. She missed qualifying for the Government's Winter Fuel Payment by one month.

"Getting the Winter Warmth Fund Grant was a great compensation on missing out on the Government money. I was able to run the heating for an hour or so longer and didn't have to get up in the night to turn it off. I can't tell you what a nice feeling it was seeing the frost on the ground and going to a warm bed."

Group Case Study:

Cumbria Gateway provides support for homeless people and those sleeping rough. The centre is in Botchergate in Carlisle in an old, hard-to-heat building. There is no gas, so the only heating source is electricity.

"We need to keep the place warm so that people with nowhere else to go can come in and get warm and have hot drinks. But the heating bills were getting so it was really difficult for us to manage. It was great that we could use the grant towards the heating costs as well for providing cooked breakfasts."

Originally, they thought they would have to stretch the grant to cover the costs of providing sleeping bags, but of the 15 bags given out to homeless people, all were donated via the charity's shop. This enabled more of the grant to go towards the costs of providing a cooked meal and keeping the drop-in centre open as a warm and welcoming place for those in need. The grant was used alongside other funding to provide a comprehensive service for the homeless, including access to food bank vouchers, Saturday night soup during the winter, and signposting for practical advice on issues such as benefits, and alcohol and drug support.

"Many of the people we help are recovering from alcohol and drug problems. They've lost their homes, their families, everything. When you're at rock-bottom it's hard to get back up. We try to give a helping hand, make sure that at the very least there's always a hot drink and somewhere to get warm."

6: Overall Conclusions:

The Warm Homes, Healthy People scheme as jointly delivered by Cumbria Community Foundation (Winter Warmth grant) and Cumbria Rural Enterprise Agency (Hot Spots grant has) continued to deliver positive outcomes for individual households much as it did in 2012.

It has enabled people in the greatest need of maintaining a decent level of warmth in their homes - older people, people with disabilities and/or serious health conditions, people with young children - to:

- Meet the immediate, short-term costs of large fuel bills
- Occasionally meet other costs necessary to keeping warm e.g. new bedding for

efficient and, sometimes, dangerous heating systems

- Receive advice and help with regard to other energy saving improvements such as additional insulation, draught-proofing, etc.
- Have the peace of mind of an annual maintenance contract.

Again as last year, people accessing both Winter Warmth and Hot Spots grants frequently suffer from multiple problems due to living in hard-to-heat houses. These include damaged and draughty windows, damp, and single wall construction dwellings (very prevalent in older housing stock and in rural areas) which are difficult and expensive to insulate.

Both UK and European research points to a consistent set of risk factors that make people more susceptible to mortality and morbidity related to winter cold. These are:

- Being elderly
- Being female
- Living alone
- Living in a house with poor thermal efficiency
- Having an underlying cardio-vascular illness
- Inadequately protected exposure to outdoor temperatures

Social isolation and fuel poverty are linked to the above factors, so it is important to try to tackle the issue of winter warmth on a wider front than the immediate need to help with fuel costs and repairs. The grants to groups to help provide hot meals and activities in a social setting, and help reduce fuel poverty through budget and benefits advice, are an essential element of this wider front, complementing the grants to individuals.

All forms of energy are likely to continue to rise in price. In Cumbria there is the added problem that many people in rural areas are dependent upon especially expensive oil-fired heating systems. The county also has an ageing population, adding significantly to the numbers of potentially vulnerable people.

Therefore, until funding mechanisms are available to implement serious upgrades to the housing stock, including wall insulation and energy-efficient windows, there will be a continuing demand for the kind of support available through Warm Homes, Healthy People. The solutions it provides are temporary since the schemes are not equipped to tackle the underlying problems of expensive fuel and energy-inefficient housing. But the evaluation and the case studies demonstrate that it is also essential to the health and well-being of the people it helps.

Judith Brown



Individual Case Studies provided by Tara Booth.