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Warm Homes, Healthy People – summary report

Harrow Housewarmers was a project funded by the Department of Health under its Warm Homes, Healthy People programme.

Warm Homes, Healthy People was a one-off £20m programme covering the period mid-December to the end of January. The programme arose because of the publication, by the NHS, of the Cold Weather Plan for 2011/12, which identifies that an average of 27,000 excess deaths occur each year during the December to March period. This combined with ill-health and falls during cold weather cost the NHS an estimated £850m each year. Early intervention should be possible at relatively low cost and enable these larger costs to be avoided.

The Harrow Housewarmers project received £68,500 from the DoH. This was a partnership project with Harrow CAB and Age UK (Harrow) and the NHS (Northwest London Hospitals Trust and Harrow PCT). Funding was divided as follows: -

		Original budget £	Out-turn £
Harrow council	Staffing	8,000	550
	Checklists and toolkits	5,000	3,995
	Communications	10,000	945
	Consultancy	1,000	-
Age UK Harrow	Staffing	6,000	6,000
	Staff and volunteer recruitment	12,000	18,000
	Transport and support	4,900	4,900
Harrow CAB	Staffing	16,000	26,800
	Briefing and training	2,000	2,000
Firm Foundation	Homeless shelter	3,600	3,600
Total		68,500	66,790

In addition to the above, Harrow council also coordinated the programme with its affordable warmth programme to provide free insulation to cavity walls and lofts across the borough. This was mostly funded by CERT money but the council provided grants for loft insulation top-ups and Able-to-pay customers.

Outputs

- A total of £66,790 has been spent to date. Council under-spends (in the Jan to March period) were transferred to Harrow CAB to enable them to extend their debt advice service for energy for a further three months (i.e. April to June). A balance of £1710 would be available to support a similar programme in the current year

Harrow Council

- A launch event was held in the Members Lounge on 16 Jan 2012, addressed by Bill Stephenson - the Leader of the Council; Brendon Hills - the Corporate Director of Community and Environment, and Carol Furlong from the PCT
- A press release was issued promoting the project which was picked up by the Harrow Observer
- A half page advert was placed in Harrow People
- 5000 liquid crystal thermometers were printed, 2000 of these were distributed to partners

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- 8000 Harrow Housewarmer leaflets were printed and 5000 were distributed to partners and social work teams.
- Team Briefings were made to social work teams at Kenton NRC, Civic 3; Byron NRc and with Meals on wheels teams at the CDU.
- 88 homes were insulated and or draught-proofed under the Affordable Warmth programme – resulting in an additional £15,500 being invested into home energy efficiency

Harrow CAB

- Harrow CAB employed two dedicated FTE posts to handle fuel poverty issues
- 271 clients attended 400+ face-to-face interviews at CAB to resolve fuel debt problems etc.
- 32 residents received home visits. Of these, 16 went on to claim Attendance allowance and 15 to claim disability living allowance – helping them to pay their fuel bills
- £32,500 of additional annual income from grants and benefits was secured
- Fuel debts of £344k were managed
- £10k of fuel and/or water debts were written off
- 31 applications were successfully made to charities (to clear fuel/water debts)
- 7 other charitable applications were made for equipment (bedding, pans etc.)

Age UK (Harrow)

- Buddy Volunteers project
 - 6 new Buddy Volunteers were recruited
 - 10 new clients were assisted through the project. Assistance provided by the volunteers was; assistance with shopping, collection of pension on a regular basis, setting up IT for a visually impaired client and assistance with hospital appointments
 - Funding available for staffing allowed time for new systems put in place for risk assessments, task procedures and project plan for future
- 4 loft clearances which then enabled the service users to have their loft insulated
- 1 small handy person
- Additional support:
 - 1 application for Attendance Allowance
 - Advocacy services
 - 1 taxi and blue badge application

Firm Foundation

The project was able to make funding available to a local homeless shelter to fund;

- breakfast, lunch and dinner for an additional 70 guest per week in January, February and March
- an additional 840 meals

Equality of Access

The project was well used by all groups. BME breakdown for CAB shows project clients were
37% Asian (unspecified)
20% White (unspecified)
11% Black (unspecified)
4% Iranian
3% Somali

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3% Polish

3% Mixed heritage

2% Tamil

17% other or not known (including Romanian, Lithuanian, Eritrean, Iraqi, Afghani, Dutch, Moroccan, Sudanese, Portuguese)

The majority of clients were aged 50-64 with health problems, with the next largest group being younger people with children. Male and female clients were represented evenly.

Case studies

One of the HHW referral forms that CAB received was quite general – “finds home hard to heat”, so we called the client in for an interview to discuss with her. It turns out that the client had been given a new flat for herself and disabled daughter but there were no carpets. Client could not afford carpets and therefore there were terrible draughts and it was freezing. One of our advisers applied for a charitable payment and over £700 was awarded. It was agreed with the client that payment was made direct to a local carpet supplier who arranged everything for her. Client is delighted and the home is much warmer.

Client was in debt for a water bill at a previous address owing £1522 in total. A grant was obtained from Severn Trent Trust Fund for £1000 towards his debt. A payment plan was set up for him to pay the remainder in small instalments, leaving more money available to pay current fuel bills.

In another case, we were able to assist a single father and his 9-year-old son who were living without essentials such as pots and pans, bedclothes and proper heating. We were able to help the family by supplying duvets and some basic cooking equipment. We also made applications for further charitable grants for them which meant they could purchase of some further essential items. The father was absolutely overwhelmed by the service and so grateful.