

Notes from Affordable Warmth Partnership meeting (27/06/03)

Present: Andrew Cross (FoD Council), Lisa Jones (S Glos Council), Lynfa Vater (S Glos Council), Evelyn Nightingale (Pension Service), Graham Simmonds (S Glos PCT), Ian Anderson (Glos County NHS LSP Manager), Maggie Cornock (Stroud Care & Repair), Sarah Giff (SWEA), Ed Dearnley (SWEA), Gary Packer (Cotswold DC), Lynn Edwards (Stroud DC), Jessica Howell (Tewkesbury BC)

Apologies: Kaye Welfare (SWEA), Stephen McDonnell (Gloucester City Council), Sue Wild (Chelt & Tewkes PCT), Sally Daley (Stroud DC)

Warm & Well / Glos. Energy Efficiency Advice Centre Update (Sarah Giff)

Report on 2002/03: the EEAC had a good year, thanks to all for support; a manager's report has been circulated to LA's; brief details are:

- the EEAC received over 3000 enquiries and 12,000 Home Energy Checks were sent out;
- average saving per house is £38 as a result of contacting the EEAC;
- lots of events are planned for the coming 12 months.

W&W has come to the end of its first 18 month-long phase and is now a stand-alone scheme outside of the Energy Saving Trust's HECAAction programme. The 1st phase saw:

- 5000 enquiries and 3500 properties improved
- £1million worth of measures installed
- Phase 2 underway, D&G and WarmSpace chosen as contractors for new phase
- Phase 1 report is available via email – **let LJ know if you require a copy**
- **Note: LAs need to ensure new grants policies under RRO are compatible with W&W**

Tackling Fuel Poverty in Luton (Sarah Allen, Luton BC)

Luton is a unitary authority and their strategy just covers their area. Fuel poverty has been tackled from the angle of general poverty and also social inclusion (Sarah has an anti-poverty background). Their approach is based on the belief that FP is a multi-dimensional problem. Sarah is not a HECA officer but works with that person, backed by corporate support. A key to external partnership involvement is that all organisations must get added value from working on the issue. There are 3 streams to tackling fuel poverty in Luton:

- Making homes more energy efficient
- Maximising income (through benefits checks)
- Social support (access to care packages)

The team provides home visits to help clients apply for benefits – previously householders may not have taken up their entitlements due to language or interpretation difficulties, home visits can overcome these problems. Householders living in colder homes often have wider care needs so referrals are made to partner agencies such as;

- Local advice providers
- Social Services
- Warm Front scheme
- Older People's organisations
- Local PCT / health visiting teams / district nursing service
- Local EEAC

Sarah Giff made group aware that SWEA are to train health care staff on energy awareness, it is hoped this will stimulate more referrals for vulnerable clients (through Health Promotion service).

Monitoring and making a success of the scheme:

- Focus is on hard to reach households – those who don't take up advice and information through usual means, and who wouldn't self-refer
- Use existing eyes & ears within communities – pensions staff, residents' groups etc
- Free training is provided for all referrers
- Pension service staff when they visit have a card thermometer pinned to their clipboards, they are normally in a home for 20mins +, this gives time for the temperature to register and advice can be given, e.g. if person doesn't realise their home's temperature isn't appropriate for their health, the advisor can use this as a tool to encourage improvements to be made
- Good quality referrals are received from Housing Benefit Review Officers
- Centralised co-ordination of data means that every 2 weeks, incomplete referrals are flagged up and can be actioned obo the client
- The centralised co-ordination can keep track of referrals / monitor / evaluate / address problems as they arise / produce statistics for reporting purposes

The referral network:

- Warmth issues are referred to Warm Front if eligible, and Health Action Zone grant if there is a health issue
- Benefits issues are dealt with by an affordable warmth outreach worker based at CAB (FT post, funded by Luton BC – key to securing additional funding is to increase benefits take up in an area)
- Social issues are referred to the affordable warmth outreach worker

Scheme achievements:

- £150,000 Warm Front funds brought into area
- SAP rating now an average 59
- £620,000 in benefits now being claimed, which weren't claimed before

Lessons learned – reaching the fuel poor:

- Use existing networks
- The Health Action Zone helped to raise awareness and make links with health sector, including prescriptions for benefits advice through GPs
- Energy / fuel poverty training is essential for all partners as not everyone is aware of the connection between poverty and fuel poverty
- Take the service to the household – home visits are key
- Central system to monitor and evaluate is important
- Involve partners all the time and provide a referrer's helpline so they can track progress obo clients
- Recognisable branding is useful – Cosy Rosy is Luton's brand
- Support from senior management and politicians is key – in Luton this was achieved through Public Service Agreement and because the Council had signed up to an anti-poverty strategy
- Need to draw up agreed roles and responsibilities in the partnership and ensure all partners bring to and take from the partnership equally

The future:

- Health Action Zone funding continues
- An emergency heating scheme is under development (loaning temporary heaters and providing installation service and energy efficiency advice)
- Develop working arrangements with LSP
- Working closely with Single Assessment Process (question on warmth on assessment form)
- Concerted winter campaign
- Continue to plug Cost Rosy scheme branding

How can we take forward the lessons learnt in Luton, in our area?

- Although none of the authorities is a Health Action Zone, we should each still be involved with our Director of Public Health
- More emphasis on increasing benefits take up, and tackling the financial issues of vulnerable households – link ups with CAB, Benefits Agency & Pension Service, local welfare rights services etc. particularly Attendance Allowance as this impacts on Basic Credit Approval awarded to LAs from Government each year

Community Strategies

These are an ideal forum in which to promote affordable warmth issues because by their nature these strategies are written and to be actioned by partnerships including PCTs and LAs. **Therefore all LAs need to ensure that affordable warmth / energy efficiency are included in their strategies.**

AOB

- The Partnership has been chosen as an example of best practice in involving outside organisations in work to tackle fuel poverty, by Association for the Conservation of Energy. When published, the case study will be circulated to the group.
- Reminder that the NEA Fuel Poverty Forum meetings are still being held quarterly, normally in Taunton (www.nea.org.uk for details)
- NEA Conference, Derby 8-10th September
- Next meeting: 18th September – main topic is review of past year and plans for coming year