

Action for Affordable Warmth Partnership

Notes from Steering Group Meeting
8th December 2005, EEAC Offices, Mitcheldean

1. **Present** Andrew Banfield (Cheltenham and Tewkesbury CAB), Tim Garland (Pensions Service), Sally Daley (Stroud DC), Diana Billingham (Cheltenham and Tewkesbury PCT), Maggie Cornock (Stroud Care & Repair), Katie Shears (Eaga Partnership), Evelyn Nightingale (Pensions Service), Gary Packer (Cotswold DC), David Sutton (Glos City Council), Andrew Cross (FODDC), Kaye Welfare (SWEA- Chair), Jessica Howell (Tewkesbury BC).

Apologies Louise Twinam (NEA), Martin Eible (NEA), Barbara Piranty (GRCC), Marian Winship (FODDC)

2. **Minutes of Last Meeting** (15.09.05)

Andrew Banfield wrongly listed as PCT not CAB. Amendment noted.

▪ **Progress of Actions arising from minutes:**

- **Information packs** were delivered to Stroud Care & Repair and Pensions Service as requested. EN mentioned they have been discerning who they've given packs to- but could distribute more. KW mentioned issue of staff capacity to put packs together but would see if some more could be arranged for Pensions Service.
- **Link Age Strategic Board**- KW gave presentation -hoping to be on steering group
- **Equity Release event**- ongoing action- MC & EN to arrange for New Year.
- **Village Agent**- no news has been reported. Kaye to speak to Barbara.
- **Review of AW Strategy**- covered by Agenda
- **Village Award** – KW attended meeting. Found out would need to contribute £1500 (£500 prize + running admin costs). Local Authorities / SWEA could not provide funding for this so although good idea, will not progress with award this year.

ACTION

Kaye to speak to Barbara about Village Agent

3. **Update on Influencing Key Decision Makers**

- **NEA/ LSP Project** – some interest in workshop/ subject but not sufficient to make it worthwhile. May have been due to time of year with numerous other workshops on, or possibly that a presentation had already been given to Glos. Healthy Living Partnership who were key target audience.

Need to think of a new direction for engaging GHLP/ GSP. Look to producing email bulletin and possibly link to an event to review AW Strategy (please see notes later).

SD had wanted to discuss the issue of a fuel poverty target as part of the Local Area Agreement with the GHLP- so issue raised at meeting instead.

- **Fuel Poverty Target** - SD mentioned such a target would be likely to fit under the 'Healthy Communities & Older People' section. Target needs to be outcome based and measurable. DB/ KW mentioned it would be useful to include some indicators relevant to the work of other AW partners.

- **Warm and Well scheme** could provide some measurable indicators e.g. number of properties receiving energy efficiency measures, expenditure on scheme, carbon saved. KW mentioned would need to link effectively to Warm Front figures to give a true indicator of the outcomes of Warm and Well scheme.
- **Local Authority Housing Condition Survey**- discussion about use of data from these surveys but would be difficult as these only represent a snapshot, and each Local Authority works on a different time scale for undertaking a survey.
- **Referrals** - discussion about using the number of referrals from AW partners as a possible indicator. TG mentioned the Pensions Service have data on Warm and Well referrals. EN questioned whether there would be a problem releasing data, but should not be if only figures used and not names/ addresses etc. TG asked if a referral form is used for relevant agencies/ AW partners to refer clients to W&W. Kaye mentioned a form had been used for this purpose at the start of W&W but relatively few of them used. KW mentioned it is difficult to keep track of where referrals have come from the Warm and Well scheme/ EEAC accurately as a number of ways clients can be referred.

Andrew Banfield mentioned that a large number of CAB clients are in debt to fuel companies. CAB could possibly look at tracking a particular group of clients (as a pilot over a certain time period), who have been referred to Warm and Well, to monitor any impact this has had on their ability to pay fuel bills etc.

- **Using SAP Rating** – also discussion about using improvements in SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure- energy efficiency) as an indicator eg. household with SAP rating of 65 can be assumed to be at a lower risk of fuel poverty. DS mentioned how achievable it was to achieve a SAP rating of 65- and whether this would be a true indicator as some harder to treat homes may have been improved considerably by energy efficiency measures but this would not be demonstrated by the SAP rating. GP pointed out that types of homes etc could possibly be put into bands, so the impact of Warm and Well could be more easily demonstrated. DS / GP also mentioned possibly linking into the new Housing Rating System and Decent Homes standard. . KW mentioned that Warm and Well contract will be re-tendered shortly and as part of the specification there could be a requirement to provide SAP rating data as part of monitoring.

ACTION
Issue of SAP rating/ Decent Homes Standard data as an indicator for potential fuel poverty target to be discussed by HECA group

4. Training and Referral

- **Warm Front Update**- Katie stated that she was aware there had been some communication problems from Eaga recently (particularly in relation to the excess contribution some clients have been asked to pay), but she's very keen to provide lots more information and keep the group /Members up to date. Katie handed out an update on Warm Front (**please see document attached to email**).
 - **Client Contributions**- KS mentioned that Warm Front grants could obviously not be increased to cover all eventualities, but some changes are being made re how clients are informed they may need to pay towards any excess costs. The EEAC have been taken off the letter to clients as a contact for finding out about possible funding (although Local Authorities are still mentioned in the letter). Eaga are trying to identify Local Authorities/ charitable trusts who may be able to offer top ups to clients. The clients could then be sent information on this or directly referred to relevant bodies. Also trying to include more information in client letter and clearer breakdown of cost. KW mentioned that there has been lobbying on this issue.

ACTION

- KS to send any updates to all AW group members as appropriate
- KW/ JH (liaise with Katie) to send letter on behalf of the Affordable Warmth Group to be sent to Eaga/ Government to state concern about the issue of client contribution to Warm Front grants

- **Referrals**- Eaga re promoting Eaga portal as referral mechanism/ source of info for relevant organisations to refer clients/ check status. KS encouraged the group members to use the portal or call the enquiries line on 0191 247 38 22 (not for public use). KW raised the issue of whether the portal could be used to check referrals to Warm Front for a particular scheme e.g. Warm & Well.

- **Prices**- Katie mentioned she appreciated that there had been some concern about the prices Warm Front pay for installations. A tendering process took place which means set prices are now paid for each job and contractors have no leeway in what they charge. Local firms may be able to do the work more cheaply, but Eaga work with larger contractors who can meet the specification for quality, customer service, and capacity and time scales required by Eaga. AC mentioned he had heard from some local contractors that they had to wait a long time for packs of parts/ materials to come through. Also mentioned that it appears some of the Eaga contractors are also sub-contracting out work.
- **Contractors** – SD mentioned it would be useful to be provided with information on who the contractors are working in the SW as don't always recognise names if clients have queries/ concerns. KW mentioned now much more difficult to work with Warm Front as don't know who contractors are.
- **Future Funding** – issue of the Chancellor's recent pre-budget statement raised- implied would be funding for pensions not in receipt of benefits towards heating/ energy efficiency measures. Not sure if this is Warm Front or 'new money'. Eaga will be issuing a statement once more info is known.

ACTION

KS to follow up:

- Whether referral figures directly from Warm and Well can be established
- Investigate why contractors are having to wait for packs of parts/ materials
- See if information on main Warm Front installers in area can be provided
- Provide further information on outcomes of Chancellor's pre-budget statement

- **Warm and Well Scheme** – full update will be given to Warm and Well steering group. Overview: between April-September 2005 there have been 1774 entries to scheme. Of those only 64 have not been referred to some sort of funding scheme (e.g. Glos. Energy Efficiency Grants, Warm Front or Scottish Power bulk discount). Most LA money has now been spent. Warm and Well group will be looking into eligibility criteria, and scheme is due to be re-tendered in January.

5. Access to Information

- **Targeted advice to vulnerable & older people**- further to Diana's email on this subject she mentioned that the PCT were keen to target vulnerable and older people to raise awareness about assistance with fuel poverty etc, to try and reduce excess winter deaths, and demands on service provision. Planning to send out 'greetings card' similar to used in the past with advice & contact details. Some funding for card from PCT & CAB has stated they will contribute. Card will be distributed by all those who undertake home visits e.g. health visitors, Pensions service staff.

6. Energy Efficiency for Tenants

Dinyar who is working on this for SWEA was unable to attend the AW meeting was on a course. SLAs have been established with some of the Housing Associations to provide advice to their tenants. Fact sheets have also been produced (e.g. on energy suppliers, Economy 7) which could be used for both housing association and private tenants. Fact sheets should be available to download in the future- for Local Authorities etc to add their logo and use. Also working on a leaflet for Landlords. Warm Front also has a fact sheet for landlords. KS made the group aware that the qualifying floor area for Warm Front eligibility was incorrect on the fact sheet and had now changed to 60 sqm.

7. Review of Affordable Warmth Strategy

Discussion about the best way for the AW strategy to be reviewed. DB mentioned more engagement from relevant groups (e.g. GSP. GHL), would be achieved if something drafted first then consulted on).

Value of integrating NEA LSP work with AW Review discussed. Possibility of inviting some key people to next AW meeting (e.g. LSP reps, GHLP reps) then seeing if Martin Eibl from (under NEA funding) could facilitate AW meeting to review strategy. Also discussed that some preparation work may be required by AW members prior to strategy review meeting (to ensure it as effective as possible) e.g. so that links can possibly made with their organisations own work & targets.

ACTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ KW/ SD/ DB & JH to meet to discuss further▪ Relevant people to be invited to next AW meeting▪ Venue / date for meeting to be arranged▪ AW members to be notified of possible preparation may be necessary prior to meeting

8. Regional Activity Update

KW told the group that regional strategies are currently being produced on energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

A consultation event is taking place **on 9th January in Exeter**. All AW members should have received an email about it.

KW encouraged as many AW members as possible to attend so that the local perspective could be given to ensure the regional strategies support local work already being carried out encourage new work to be developed and don't negatively impact on work at a local level.

9. Round the Table Partners Report

Cotswold DC- Gary mentioned they had recently undertaken some training with volunteers who visit older people (using second homes money). Gary also showed the group a tea towel they've produced ('12 Months to Save the Planet').

PCT- Diana told the group that the PCTs were undergoing a reorganisation. Two options had been proposed- 1 option is that there would just be 1 PCT for all of Gloucestershire. Looking for changes to be fully completed by April 2007 Review of Strategic Health Authorities also taking place along similar time scale.

Stroud DC- Sally mentioned the 'Warm Farms' feasibility study they had been working in partnership with SWEA. Project to provide advice to improve energy efficiency of farm houses.

Project has some very interesting outcomes which could lead to another of further projects e.g. fuel poverty is very high in farm homes, need for advice, and high interest in renewable energy use.

CAB- Andrew mentioned that the CAB had picked up some of the work GRCC were doing on 'financial literacy' e.g. implications of borrowing, enduring powers of attorney etc. KW stated EEAC would be happy to feed any information into the programme on dealing with fuel debts etc.

EEAC- Kaye gave an update on the Prisons Project. Now being rolled out to prisons across the SW. EEACS across SW will be providing advice surgeries to prison visitors etc. Also producing training package as part of project for a range of abilities.

Kaye also mentioned that there had been a huge volume of calls to the EEAC over the last couple of months. EEAC staff have been spending a lot of time giving advice. Increase in calls could partly be due to rises in fuel costs and cold weather. EEAC has also undertaken 75 outreach events, 13 training sessions and radio coverage.

10. Next Meeting

Date and Venue to be confirmed (likely to be March).
Entire meeting will be to review the AW Strategy.

11. AOB

There was no other business

Glossary

- AW – Affordable Warmth
- CFL – Compact Fluorescent Lamp (energy efficient light bulb)
- EEAC- Energy Efficiency Advice Centre
- EEC- Energy Efficiency Commitment
- GHLP – Gloucestershire Healthy Living Partnership
- GSP – Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership
- GRCC- Gloucestershire Rural Community Council
- HEC- Home Energy Check
- HECA – Home Energy Conservation Act
- LA – Local Authority
- LASP – Local Authority Support Programme
- LSP- Local Strategic Partnership
- PCT- Primary Care Trust