

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Healthier Communities and Older People Overview & Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	18 January 2011
TITLE:	Progress on tackling winter health
WARD:	ALL
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>	
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b>  B&NES Affordable Warmth Draft Action Plan January 2011	

### 1 THE ISSUE

The latest publication in 2010 of the Local Authority Health Profiles identified B&NES as an outlier with a high proportion of the total number of deaths taking place during the winter months. This paper updates the Committee on the actions being taken to tackle this and bring about improvement.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview & Scrutiny Panel is asked to agree that:

- 2.1 The Action Plan of the B&NES Affordable Warmth Action Group is proportionate and comprehensive

### **3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The Keep Warm Keep Well booklet is provided free nationally. Local Warm Streets project administration and marketing is paid for by the sponsors Scottish and Southern Energy so covering the costs of the Warm Streets leaflet. The other actions proposed are about how we prioritise the use of current staff time. Although there is uncertainty about national budget allocations that impact on affordable warmth services.
- 3.2 Housing Services contribute staff resources to the help oversee the Warm Streets partnership arrangements and raise awareness of the service amongst B&NES residents and Council frontline staff. The Council currently provides some grant funding towards loft and cavity wall insulation for vulnerable residents.

### **4 THE REPORT**

- 4.1 The conditions which cause the majority of excess winter deaths are cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. The effect of low temperature is to reduce the effectiveness of the immune system, cause thicker mucus, and encourage mould growth so making a person more susceptible to infections such as respiratory ones. Low temperature also raises the blood pressure and thus makes people more susceptible to strokes and heart disease. The cold also causes hypothermia, falls and other injuries, and poor mental and social health and an increase in hospital admissions.
- 4.2 We need to ensure that all front-line staff going into people's homes are aware of our poor excess winter deaths position and can identify cold houses and give occupant(s) the contact details to access remediable support services. We need to improve the systems and ways of working between the health, statutory, private and voluntary sectors and housing services tackling fuel poverty and affordable warmth in B&NES. We need to give the work of the Affordable Warmth Group more prominence.
- 4.3 The numbers of excess winter deaths in England and Wales reduced markedly in 2009-2010 with a decrease of 30 per cent compared with figures for 2008/09. Unfortunately because of the need to produce comparative national information the Health Profiles indicator where we were the worst in England covers 2005-08. Over these three years there were 130 excess winter deaths yearly in B&NES. In 2008-09 according to local data there were 139 excess winter deaths but the comparative position will not become available until June 2011 and in 2009-10 there were only 73 excess winter deaths. Our local calculation of the Excess Winter Mortality Index for B&NES also shows that this reduced markedly from 28.3% in 2008-09 to 14.0% in 2009-10, a figure similar to the one 5 years ago when we ranked in the middle of other local authorities. This lower figure will not inform the national Health Profile 3 year moving average indicator until the 2012 one is published.
- 4.4 An important related issue is the withdrawal of the national Warm Front scheme which provides grant funded heating and insulation measures for low income

vulnerable households. The government funding for this scheme is being reduced significantly over the next two years before it is expected to be replaced by part of the Green Deal arrangements currently being worked on by the Government. However, there are currently no specific arrangements for a similar grant funded scheme at this point in time. The Council's local Warm Streets Partnership Scheme is expected to continue to provide loft and cavity wall insulation for low income vulnerable households, energy efficiency advice and benefit check

4.5 Assistance for heating improvements is currently available for vulnerable owner occupiers through the Council's Home Improvement Assistance Scheme. Following the removal of the Private Sector Renewal Capital allocation by Government, Housing Services are considering options to mitigate the loss funding for this scheme. Subject to funding being available, options for assistance may include small grants for works such as repairs to heating systems for vulnerable low income households.

4.6 The actions to promote affordable warmth in B&NES have been developed by the B&NES Affordable Warmth Action Group. This group includes members from the Council, Public Health, Somer and other agencies working with groups vulnerable to cold. These actions are aimed to:

- improve the energy efficiency of all housing in Bath and North East Somerset.
- maximise income for vulnerable households
- reduce household expenditure on fuel
- develop partnership working with all appropriate organisations and agencies in order to effectively

A full list of the actions being undertaken and being considered is shown in the Appendix.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

## **6 EQUALITIES**

6.1 Excess winter mortality in B&NES affects the elderly disproportionately and women more than men. There is marked local geographical variation by electoral ward and by general practice. People in the least deprived areas and those in the next to most deprived ones have had the worst experience with excess winter mortality in recent years. We have no local information on the impact of sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and disability although it is very likely that those in poor health are adversely affected by cold weather. A formal proportionate equalities impact assessment has not yet been carried out.

## **7 CONSULTATION**

7.1 We will consult on the Affordable Warmth Action Plan with Ward Councillors, Cabinet Members, Parish Councils, Town Councils, Overview & Scrutiny Panel, Other B&NES Services, Service Users, Local Residents, Community Interest Groups, and Other Public Sector Bodies.

7.2 We will send hard copies and electronic ones to stakeholders as appropriate for a two month consultation period.

## **8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION**

8.1 Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Property; Human Rights.

## **9 ADVICE SOUGHT**

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Council Solicitor) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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<b>Background papers</b>	Partnership Board for Health and Wellbeing Report Date: 15 September 2010
	Report Title: Winter Health in Bath and North East Somerset
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	