

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 14th January 2016

Report of: Corporate Manager Health Improvement (on behalf of the Winter Wellbeing Partnership)

Subject/Title: Winter Wellbeing and Winter Planning

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Michael Jones / Cllr Janet Clowes

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 The multi-agency Winter Wellbeing Partnership was formed in October 2012. This followed a workshop that had highlighted that Cheshire East had higher than average numbers of excess winter deaths and a recognition that an effective partnership approach was required to try and improve this situation. Putting the health and wellbeing of residents first is a priority for the Council and the Winter Wellbeing partnership is working towards this.
- 1.2 There has been significantly improved partnership working as a result of the group being established and a raising of awareness in relation to the risks associated with cold weather. In addition we are better placed to identify those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of colder weather.
- 1.3 There is, however, still more to be done and the group continues to meet to both co-ordinate activity for this winter and to work on longer term issues. In addition there is now a recognition of the need to co-ordinate activity in relation to hot weather and this work has progressed during 2015 with effective partnership working to mitigate against the potential impacts of the mini heatwave at the beginning of July 2015.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Members consider the report and the arrangements for co-ordinated Winter Wellbeing currently in place.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that Members of the Committee are aware of recent work to raise awareness of and mitigate against the dangers posed to health by extreme weather events.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 Excess winter deaths are defined by the Office of National Statistics as the difference between the number of deaths during the four winter months (December – March) and the average number of deaths during the preceding four months (August – November) and the following four months (April – July). Figures released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in November 2015 show a significant decrease in excess winter mortality in Cheshire East between 2012/13 and 2013/14, from 21.6 (Confidence Interval (CI) 18.9-24.3) to 9.1 (CI 7.3-10.9). Excess winter mortality in 2013/14 was significantly below the England rate.
- 4.2 However, provisional figures for 2014/15 highlight a significant increase at national level from an index of 11.3 (CI 11.1-11.5) in 2013/14 to an index of 27.4 (CI 27.1-27.6) in 2014/15. Analysis of local data suggests a similar picture in Cheshire East, with the Excess Winter Deaths Index (EWDI) significantly above the England rate. Initial investigation suggests that this is being driven by mortality rates in those aged 65 and over from respiratory disease (ICD10 J00-J99), and to a lesser extent Alzheimers Disease and Dementia (ICD 10 F01, F03 and G30). This effect is much more marked among females than males. Improvements in 2013/14 put Cheshire East in the second best quartile nationally. It is not yet possible to compare Cheshire East with other areas for 2014/15 but it is likely that the authority's relative position will slip to the worst quartile again. A trend diagram is attached as Appendix One.
- 4.3 It is likely that the increase last winter is attributable to an increase in the numbers of people getting flu, with last year's immunisation being less effective than had been intended.
- 4.4 There is strong evidence that the majority of excess winter deaths are preventable. The evidence also suggests that isolated elderly people may be particularly vulnerable, whatever their social background. Poverty/fuel poverty, poor quality or un-insulated housing, chronic disease and multiple long term conditions are all relevant factors as well.
- 4.5 Research has established that for every £1.00 spent on tackling fuel poverty, the health service saved 42p as a by-product. By working to address fuel poverty through achieving affordable warmth, local partnerships can help to:
- Achieve safer, warmer and better insulated homes;
 - Support the local carbon reduction targets
 - Address child poverty
 - Support older people to live at home for longer
- 4.6 In March 2015 the national Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published its guidance on 'Excess winter deaths and morbidity and the health risks associated with cold homes'. It identified that the health problems

associated with cold homes are experienced during 'normal' winter temperatures, not just extremely cold weather.

There were a number of recommendations:

- Develop a strategy to address the health consequences of living in a cold home;
- Ensure there is a single point of contact health and housing referral service for people living in cold homes;
- Provide tailored solutions via the single point of contact health and housing referral service for people living in cold homes;
- Identify people at risk of ill-health from living in a cold home;
- Make every contact count by assessing the heating needs of people who use primary health and home care services;
- Non-health and social care workers who visit people at home should assess their heating needs;
- Discharge vulnerable people from health or social care settings to a warm home;
- Train health and social care practitioners to help people whose homes may be too cold;
- Training housing professionals and faith and voluntary sector workers to help people whose homes may be too cold for their health and wellbeing;
- Train heating engineers, meter installers and those providing insulation to help vulnerable people at home.

To move towards achieving these recommendations requires some preparation – understanding the local situation, developing a shared understanding, engaging appropriate partners and initiating joint working.

4.7 Age UK has published a number of reports related to Excess Winter Deaths including 'The Cost of Cold' and 'Excess Winter Deaths - Preventing an avoidable tragedy'. They calculate the cost to the NHS of cold homes as being in the region of £1.3 billion. Social Services costs will also be significant.

4.8 The impacts of cold on the health of older people are:

- Exposure to cold through the hands, feet, face or head can rapidly lead to a drop in core body temperature;
- Cold air can narrow airways, making it harder to breathe;
- Cold air increases the risk of respiratory infection;
- Cold lowers heart rate but raises blood pressure much more;
- In older people raised blood pressure may last many hours;
- Cold increases the risk of blood clotting;
- Blood clotting and raised blood pressure both increase the risk of heart attack or stroke;
- The longer someone is exposed to cold, the more at risk they are of all these effects.

- 4.9 Knowing the risks is important and raising awareness of these impacts and the risks of being cold is a priority. There is also evidence that during the winter months older people feel more isolated and lonely due to a variety of factors including reduced day light hours which has an effect on their contact with neighbours and their willingness to drive in the evening, and anxiety about falling during icy weather.
- 4.10 Age UK recommended five areas in which local authorities can take action:
- Map the extent of the problem and identify those at risk
 - Plan for cold weather each winter
 - Prioritise excess winter deaths and associated ill health as a public health concern;
 - Improve the energy efficiency of vulnerable older people's homes;
 - Work in partnership with local older people's groups to protect the health of older people in winter.

5. Progress to date

5.1 The Winter Wellbeing Partnership was initiated in October 2012. It is led by Cheshire East Council, but has representation from a wide range of Council services, public sector and community, voluntary and faith sector partners. This includes amongst others, Adult Social Services, Public Health, Partnerships and Communities, Highways, Strategic Housing, housing providers, the Fire and Rescue Service, Cheshire Emergency Planning Team, Snow Angels CIC, Cheshire Community Action, Age UK Cheshire East, the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups and NW Ambulance Service. A full list forms Appendix Two. Work is now focussed on four areas:

- The Winter Preparedness Plan
- Identifying Vulnerable People
- Warm Homes and energy efficiency
- Communications

5.2 For Winter 2014 / 2015 there was a £10,000 investment in resources to help keep people warm, with these being distributed in a targeted manner. Funding was made available to purchase bedding, clothing, hot water bottles, heaters, slow cookers etc. Excellent partnership working ensured that items could be stored and distributed widely, enabling easy access at short notice for frontline services and local neighbourhood groups, who were able to identify those in need and begin the more effective co-ordination of on the ground activity.

5.3 For 2015 – 2016 Cheshire East Council has secured funding to help vulnerable people heat their homes this winter.

A total of £380,340 has been sourced from Department of Energy and Climate Change (£180,340), Warm Zones (£100,000) with match funding from Cheshire East Council strategic housing budgets (£50,000) and Public Health (£50,000)

Residents who are eligible can apply for grants to help with:

- First time central heating systems, particularly in rural off gas areas
- Boiler repairs
- Boiler replacements

Energy Projects Plus, a charity working across Cheshire East, is working in partnership with the Council to advise residents on the grants available. The charity are handling public enquiries and carrying out a direct mailing exercise to targeted areas.

- 5.4 Peaks and Plains have established a Smart Energy Project to help their customers keep their homes warmer in a cost effective way. One of the main challenges that has been faced has been the high cost of energy for customers who have prepayment meters installed. With the majority of those people being on a low income, it is perverse that they have to pay more for their gas and electricity.
- 5.5 Another major challenge has been the number of customers supported who are off-gas and rely solely on electricity for their heating. This is obviously a more expensive option and limits the support that can be offered (in terms of energy saving devices that can be installed) Many of these customers are on an Economy 7 or 10 tariffs which only a few energy companies are now supporting, making it hard to shop around for the best deal on electricity.
- 5.6 The Smart Energy Team have had a number of achievements, including successful applications to Energy Funds, which have either reduced or written off customers' outstanding energy debt. They have also been able to save people hundreds of pounds by switching them to cheaper energy providers. So far customers have saved nearly £20,000 since going live with the project in May. Cheshire East's Care and Repair team have also been really helpful in assisting customers who have needed repairs to their properties, their boilers or central heating systems as a whole.
- 5.7 Another partner, Citizens Advice Bureau (North) promoted and publicised awareness around better deals for domestic fuel in November and for all face to face clients aim to carry out assessments of cost and usage around domestic fuel and with that information help clients shop around for better deals. They are also promoting "Energy Efficiency is the Cheapest Fuel" and are currently compiling a single reference point for use with clients on identifying grants and other funding options for insulation, heating system upgrades and advice on best use of fuel.
- 5.8 The CAB are working with Knutsford Lions on a scheme that sees some elderly people in Knutsford gifting their Winter Fuel Allowance payment from the Government to the Lions so that it can be pooled with other similar donations and then redistributed to CAB clients, who are struggling to meet the additional costs of domestic fuel during the winter months. They are also involved in supporting the WHAM project running in Macclesfield providing weekend shelter for street homeless people via the churches in the town. They meet all clients who need advice and explore their housing options.

- 5.9 TrustLink (also a Peaks and Plains initiative) have been delivering a Falls prevention Project since November 2014 – funded by CCG resilience monies. This has continued throughout the year, with funding in place until at least the end of March 2016. Clients are referred direct from North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) when they respond to patients who have fallen but there is also a dedicated falls referral email address to accept falls referrals from other professionals falls@peaksplains.org
- 5.10 The Falls Advisor’s visit, provides falls prevention advice and signposting, a falls prevention booklet, undertake a falls risk assessment and make appropriate referrals. They have forged links with Community rehab and have a rapid referral route to Physio and Occupational Therapy home visits within 72 hours. The opportunity is taken to use this intervention to undertake a holistic approach referring to a range of services including Red Cross, Eye Society, Opticians, DIB, Care and repair, Money Advice, Social Service and Gp’s. There is also a referral route to Community Outreach pharmacy for medication reviews
- 5.11 Many of the Partner organisations have now built winter preparation into their all year round activities advocating that work to prevent winter deaths and excessive admissions takes place throughout the year, well before it gets cold. Much of this is aimed at tackling fuel poverty and ensuring that suitable befriending schemes are in place.
- 5.12 Although the Winter Wellbeing partnership has improved the co-ordination of efforts to support vulnerable people and protect them from the impacts of cold weather there is still more to do.
- The November 2015 data needs to be more fully reviewed and analysed to try to better understand the reasons for the reversal in the improving trend and identify potential interventions to try to shift the position to a downward trend again. Although the ineffectiveness of the flu vaccine may be a significant factor other issues may apply, for example in relation to those with dementia, and this needs considering.
 - Further work is required to identify vulnerable people and improve our data sharing between organisations, including overcoming data protection issues relating to sharing data about individuals if that data sharing is in their best interest;
 - We need to further develop the research in relation to admissions and vulnerability;
 - We need to be better able to act quickly when a vulnerable person is identified at a time of crisis;
 - Continue to improve joint communications and engagement to ensure key messages are co-ordinated;

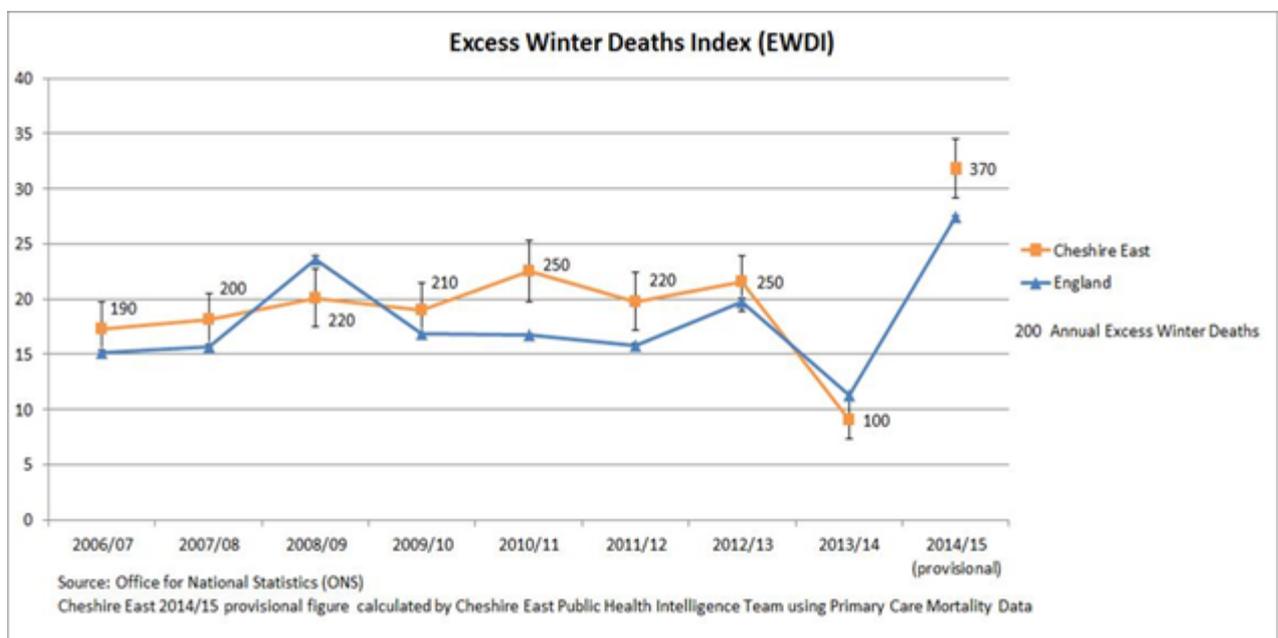
- 5.13 Next steps will be a review of the 2015 – 2016 Winter responses in relation to the NICE guidance recommendations and initiating a planning process to ensure that for 2016 – 2017 we can demonstrate that we have in place the majority of the recommendations of the NICE Guidance.

6.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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Appendix One



Appendix Two The Winter Wellbeing partners CEC Services

- Health Improvement Team
- Benefits
- Partnerships & Communities
- Highways
- Care & Repair Team
- Emergency Planning Team
- Flood Risk Team
- Business Intelligence
- Public Health
- Safeguarding Team (children's)
- Communications

Commissioning
Libraries
Housing
Adults Social Care & Independent Living
Trading Standards
Environmental Services
Community Safety Team

External Partners

Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service
Wulvern Housing
Cheshire Community Action
AgeUK
North West Ambulance Service
CCG's
NHS (including Community and District Nurses)
Faith Sector
Peaks & Plains Housing Association
Plus Dane Housing Association
Poynton Town Council
Energy Projects Plus
Middlewich Vision
Snow Angels
ChALC (Cheshire Association of Local Councils)
CVSCE (Cheshire Voluntary Service Cheshire East)Groundwork Cheshire
Riverside Housing Association
SPEN