

Committee: Healthier communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 19 April 2012

Agenda item: **6**

Wards: All

Subject: Update on Warm Homes

Lead officer: Dr Val Day, Interim Director of Public Health

Lead member: Cllr Suzanne Evans

Forward Plan reference number:

Contact officers: Julia Groom, Joint Consultant in Public Health, Merton, Steve Nottage, Environmental Health (Housing) Manager

Recommendations:

To note progress on the implementation of Merton's Warm Homes Healthy Lives Development Funds and progress towards the development of Merton's Cold Weather Plan.

PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Scrutiny Panel on Excess Winter Deaths and the Warm Homes, Healthy People initiative.
- 1.2. Since the last report to Scrutiny Panel in October 2011 there has been no new data on Excess Winter Deaths in Merton. As reported previously, between 2006-2009 there was an average of 101 excess winter deaths per year in Merton. The Excess Winter Deaths Index (EWDI) was 26.5%. This was significantly higher than the England average EWDI of 18.1%.
- 1.3. Progress has been made on action to address Excess Winter Deaths through the Department of Health 'Warm Homes, Healthy People Fund'. Merton were successful in being awarded £174, 411 for a range of local initiatives.

DETAILS

- 2.1. Since the last report to the Scrutiny Panel in October 2011 there has been no new data on Excess Winter Deaths in Merton. As reported previously, between 2006-2009 there was an average of 101 excess winter deaths per year in Merton. The Excess Winter Deaths Index (EWDI) was 26.5%. This was significantly higher than the England average EWDI of 18.1%.
- 2.2. The numbers of Excess Winter Deaths are relatively small. On average, about 90 people die during each of the non-winter months and 115 per month in the

winter months. It is also important to be aware that EWDI at local authority level varies considerably from year to year, and is subject to wide fluctuation.

- 2.3 Nationally, 80% of excess winter deaths occur in people over the age of 75. The Excess Winter Death Index (2002-2009) in Merton is significantly higher than the England average for people aged over 85 years, and for people whose underlying cause of death is chronic lower respiratory disease.
- 2.4 Evidence indicates that although Merton has been identified as having significantly higher Excess Winter Deaths than England this may reflect the annual fluctuations and the relatively small numbers of deaths rather than any identifiable change in Merton.
- 2.5 However EWD remains an important public health issue and data suggests that people over 85 years and people with chronic lower respiratory disease are at particular risk in Merton. Deaths from respiratory and circulatory diseases are responsible for much of the increase in deaths seen during the winter months.
- 2.6 In order to address the issue of Excess Winter Deaths, the Department of Health (DH) published a Cold Weather Plan for England which provides guidance on how to reduce the impact of severe cold weather on health. It recommends steps to reduce the impact of severe weather to be taken by:
- NHS, social care, and other organisations
 - Professionals working with people at risk
 - Individuals and local communities
- Merton will prepare a local Cold Weather Plan in 2012/13.
- 2.7 DH also invited bids for the Warm Homes, Healthy People fund by 8 December 2011. Steve Nottage, Environmental Health (Housing) Manager submitted Merton's bid having co-ordinated a wide range of activities from a diverse group of organisations. These were;
- Age UK Merton
 - NHS SW London
 - Climate Energy
 - MASCOT Telecare
 - Merton Seniors Forum
 - Osborne Energy
 - Groundwork London
- 2.8 The bid proposed a suite of interventions enhancing existing resources in new ways:
- On visiting elderly and disabled residents, Age UK Merton's Handyperson Scheme will check heating systems' operation, ensure controls are set properly, check for loft insulation (and make referrals) and clear snow/ ice from paths including gritting. Clients identified through existing database (and responding directly in the case of path-clearing).
 - Home Safety and Falls assessments by Age UK Merton together with associated works.

- Age UK Merton to address Older Peoples' Groups encouraging greater engagement with support services
- Age UK Merton's 'Home Service Team' to provide extreme weather support for households with shopping for essentials
- Climate Energy to provide training sessions for outreach workers across all sectors, to identify at-risk residents and refer them on to appropriate schemes and assistance.
- Provide and install 'extreme temperature sensors' for 80% of existing MASCOT Telecare clients in Merton, including monitoring these sensors 24/7. (Assumed 20% non-access/ rejection rate)
- To print 20,000 copies of the Merton Seniors' Forum 'Winter Warmth in Merton' booklet, with focused advice and local contacts, and postage to older residents, those with special needs, those with young children and other 'at risk' patients via GP surgeries and Social Services' Adult Assessment Team. This number will ensure every household with at-risk seniors, adults with special needs and with children under 5 will receive the booklet.
- Remove barriers to existing domestic insulation schemes by providing loft clearance and partial loft boarding to 250 Merton homes. Referrals through RE:NEW and Green Doctor databases, Age UK Merton and the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre.
- Enable Groundwork's Green Doctors to visit community groups across Merton to provide open-forum energy advice followed by one-to-one advice and home visits including signposting residents to relevant schemes and help.

2.9 Just before Christmas 2011, the DH announced that Merton had been awarded **£174,411** for the Merton-based activities, to the best of our knowledge, more than any other London Borough. On completion of the programme of activities, upwards of 12,000 Merton residents will have benefitted from WHHP-funded advice, activities or energy-saving improvements.

2.10 All of the streams of activities have been working well, with the exception of the mailing out of the Winter Warmth Booklet. 20,000 booklets have been printed and enveloped, but there have been some issues with their distribution using address labels supplied by the Primary Care Support Service because duplicate entries have resulted in many households receiving several copies of the booklet.

2.11 Several lessons have been learnt through this process, which was introduced and implemented very quickly, across several organisations and offices and for which there had been no previous precedent. The DH have since acknowledged that providing the money so late into the winter, instead of beforehand, and requiring most of the monies to be spent before the end of March has led to a number of issues.

2.12 One of the more innovative parts of the bid was to install 'Extreme temperature Sensors' in 80% of MASCOT Telecare users homes. The sensors detect cold temperatures in the home which would indicate the residents are at risk of strokes, falls or hypothermia due to excess cold and alert the MASCOT call centre which is monitored 24/7. MASCOT staff can react to help the residents at risk. The Temperature Sensors detect excess heat, due to poor ventilation and solar gain in summer and also detect rapid temperature increase suggesting a fire has started and alert the call centre to these hazards too. These measures help protect some of the most vulnerable residents in the borough at risk of becoming excess winter death statistics and should provide this protection for many years to come.

Next Steps

2.13 Whilst the DH have not confirmed that there will be future rounds of Warm Homes, Healthy People funding or its equivalent available, Merton is anticipating sending the DH a full report of its achievements in an effort to keep communication channels open and in hope of benefitting to a similar degree in future years. In the mean time, many of the agencies that have been part of the WHHP bid will be working together to define and implement Merton's Cold Weather Plan, the first meeting of which will take place in April 2012.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

None

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

None

TIMETABLE

Merton Cold Weather Plan to be developed by Autumn 2012.

FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

None

LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

None

HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

None

CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

None

RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

None

APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cold Weather Plan for England, Department of Health 2011

http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_130926.pdf