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REPORT TO: HOUSING SUPPORT STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP  
REPORT FROM: SUPPORTING PEOPLE TEAM  
DATE: 26<sup>TH</sup> May 2009

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**OLDER PERSON AND PHYSICAL & SENSORY DISABILITY WINTER  
PRESSURES INTERIM REPORT**

PURPOSE OF REPORT: To provide an update on the outcomes for winter pressure funds for older person and people with physical and sensory disability.

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 13<sup>th</sup> September 2008, The Joint Commissioning Board agreed an additional £50k one off spend on reducing winter pressures for vulnerable older people or people with physical and sensory disability.
- 1.2 After consultations with a number of local lead officers for Warm Zone, The Special Projects Officer at Exeter City Council and National Energy Action Trust, the project aim was agreed.
- 1.3 The aim would be to give advice and information on the wide range of services available in Devon to help alleviate fuel poverty and prevent deterioration in the health of the most vulnerable people in these groups. Providing practical assistance to ensure that hard to reach people were identified and given the support they needed to access services currently available. Or that 'little bit of help', which could alleviate a problem e.g. draught proofing or changing to thermostatic values for central heating through Devon Care & Repair.
- 1.4 Age Concern Exeter and Age Concern Devon met the criteria to deliver the project, and received £6,250 and £43,740 respectively and their existing contracts were varied. The projects started on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2009. In order to ensure individuals could access the energy saving measures through Devon Care and Repair, the providers ring-fenced a percentage of the additional funds for such work.

2.0 PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES

2.1 Age Concern Devon

- The project was extremely well promoted through radio/television, local press, Carers Links, mail drops, partnership agencies and presentations delivered to a wide range of community groups.
- Staff were trained to help them identify if clients were living in fuel poverty or if clients' homes could benefit by some energy saving measures.
- A total of 432 calls was received
- 209 general telephone enquiries

- 223 full winter warmth assessments were undertaken
- 27 home visits
- 69 clients needed no further action
- 11 referrals to Warm Zone
- 9 referrals to Warm Front
- 8 referrals to Care & Repair. Referrals were low because the offer of £30 towards thermostatic valves was not a sufficient financial incentive. Most people had double glazing and did not want draft proofing. As the providers ring-fenced a percentage of the additional funds for such work the lack of take-up resulted in an under-spend of £4,860. This has since been reclaimed by our Financial Services Manager.
- 90 Benefit Health Checks were carried out, which resulted in an annual estimated increase of £109,952.20.

## 2.2 Age Concern Exeter

- Age Concern advertised the campaign with a range of leaflets and posters to GP surgeries, Post Offices, local shops as well as holding information events and promotional talks through 40 activity groups. The organisation also contacted individuals through their database.
- 10 referrals were generated through activity groups.
- From 250 contacted through database, 130 requested follow up information.
- 73 did not require further action
- 4 resulted in Warm Front referrals for central heating surveys
- 20 were referred to Devon Warm Zone for cavity wall/loft insulation
- 4 were referred for benefit/carers allowance applications
- 10 were referred for fire safety checks
- 9 were referred for draught proofing to Devon Care & Repair. We are waiting for the evidence of any financial under-spend which will be reclaimed.
- 10 were referred to Age Concern Exeter's 'Safe as Houses' for door safety chains.
- 120 either felt they were well prepared for the winter weather and wanted no other assistance or were not interested in discussing personal matters.
- Whilst some of the 130 people were referred onto just one other agency, 26 requested more than one referral.
- 1 request was made for a home visit to check heating efficiency due to client getting extraordinarily high fuel bills. It turned out that his high and low rate meter was being incorrectly read. This was rectified and he is now £500 in credit with energy supplier.

- 2.3 Both providers are making a series of follow up calls when all qualitative data will be evaluated and tabled in a final project report. The final reports are expected to be submitted by late June and the information will then be presented to both the Housing Support Strategic Partnership and Joint Commissioning Body.

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### **HOMELESSNESS WINTER PRESSURES INTERIM REPORT**

**Objective:** To provide an update on the use of the 'winter pressure' funds for Homeless groups.

#### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

1.1 On 13<sup>th</sup> September 2009, the Joint Commissioning Board, agreed £150k additional, one -off spend, to be utilised on reducing winter pressures, for Homelessness groups.

1.5 The funds were allocated to existing Service Providers following a performance based short-listing process. Providers received their allocated additional funding for the period 1<sup>st</sup> November 2008 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. The funds were split across the 3 localities as outlined below:

1.6

Locality	Allocated funds
Exeter, East & Mid	£75,000
North Devon & Torridge	£37,500
Teignbridge, South Hams & West Devon	£37,500
Total	£150,000

1.7 Providers were required to report on their work, using the National Outcomes Framework for short-term services. Their work was overseen by three locality groups; one in Northern, Eastern and Southern Devon, who met every 4-6 weeks during the winter period. The groups were led by district council representatives in each locality and members of the Homelessness Steering group.

#### **4.0 PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES**

4.1 The main objective of the 'winter pressures' fund, was as a means of piloting variable volume contracts, with the existing provider market. It is significant that, out of the 12 short-listed, only one provider, (a sole trader) opted not to be part of the process. The remaining 11 providers (48% of Homelessness providers) signed up to the initiative, and were able to deploy additional staff and start taking referrals, within a relatively short timescale.

- 4.2 While 'hard' performance data, in relation to service user outcomes, will be not become available from St Andrews University, until July 09, it is worth noting some of the additional 'softer' outcomes of this project.
- 4.3 It has already been noted that the project could be considered a successful pilot of variable volume contracts. Indeed, performance based or 'variable volume' contracts, have since been introduced for the Homelessness sector, from March 2009. These contracts incorporated some of the learning from the Homelessness Winter Pressures initiative. In addition to that, the project gave rise to the development of a number of new ways of working, for both providers and other agencies working with Homelessness groups.

## 5.0 NEW WAYS OF WORKING

- 5.1 There is no doubt that the distinctive but flexible conditions for the winter pressures fund allowed the provider market to innovate and develop new approaches and interventions. The groups noted that, although the majority of the work undertaken by providers, was in relation to crisis intervention, a smaller number of providers opted to concentrate on the provision of more intensive work with select clients, to facilitate timely move on and resettlement, and free up valuable first stage supported accommodation.

- 5.2 The following new ways of working were identified by the locality groups:

➤ Greater focus on immediate, crisis intervention work

Many providers have waiting lists and so are limited in their ability to take referrals for crisis work. During this initiative, providers were able to respond to emergency referrals to prevent evictions, where proceedings were already well underway.

➤ More creative use of accommodation units for short-term solutions

Some providers were able to offer additional units of accommodation for short-term use. Schemes included a 'crash pad', 'cold weather' provision, and use of temporary accommodation for rough sleepers.

➤ Greater focus on addressing debt/ benefits problems and preventing debt-related evictions

Many providers chose to concentrate on achieving outcomes in relation to maximising income. As a result, additional training for workers was resourced, and greater links were forged with organisations working to reduce and manage debt e.g. solicitors and CABs.

➤ Dedicated teams/ workers capable of working intensively and flexibly with complex needs clients

A small number of providers chose to work more intensively with high needs clients, with a view to helping them move on to lower support services, in a shorter period of time.

## 6.0 CASE STUDIES

- 6.1 Appendix One contains two case studies of clients who benefited from the winter pressures initiative.

## **7.0 LEARNING & NEXT STEPS**

- 7.1 This initiative has raised questions about how some of the other successful new ways of working, might be incorporated into providers' existing business models. Some providers have already begun to consider how they may embed some of the approaches they adopted under the winter pressures initiative, into their core service delivery.
- 7.2 Equally, some schemes developed during the winter pressures initiative were considered so successful, that they have now been rolled out in the longer-term. An example of this is the new STAR initiative in Exeter, which aims to both help clients experiencing short term accommodation crises, and landlords to make best use of 'hard to let' accommodation units. There is a potential link to be made between this piece of work and the Exeter City Council 'Area Based Action Plan' pilot around use of RSL stock, and the project regarding the use of Private Rented Sector housing under LAA27.
- 7.3 A crucial observation which should not be lost concerns the balance of prevention versus crisis work undertaken by providers. It was noted that having, what was, essentially, a ring-fenced amount of investment, to respond to crisis referrals, has led commissioners to the conclusion that their commissioning, in terms of prevention versus crisis intervention services, may need to be reviewed. In most cases, access to crisis accommodation would not have been possible were it not for the immediate availability of floating support.
- 7.4 It is also worth noting that, whilst during this initiative, providers were able to work quickly and flexibly, to meet emergency needs, in comparison to many of the other agencies working alongside them, who were not as able to work with shared clients in this way. This led commissioners to conclude that more collaborative commissioning might be required in order to address this issue.