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**To: Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board**

**Date: 6<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**From: Allison Duggal – Director of Public Health and Wellbeing, CCC**

**Title: Addressing the impact of cold and damp homes - Affordable warmth programmes**

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## **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To brief the Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board on the approach being taken in Coventry to understand and address the impacts of living in the cold home.

## **2 Information/Background**

- 2.1 In England, a household is classed as being in fuel poverty if the household's energy efficiency rating (EPC) is B and D or below and their disposable income (after housing and fuel costs) is below the poverty line.
- 2.2 According to the latest UK Government statistics released in 2023 (2021 data) it is estimated that 28,525 (20.8%) households are living in fuel poverty in Coventry. Coventry has the third highest level of fuel poverty in the West Midlands behind Birmingham (23.2%) and Wolverhampton (21.8%) respectively.
- 2.3 UK Government fuel poverty statistics are time lagged, and relate to 2021-22, before the worst of the energy crisis in the winter of 2022-23.
- 2.4 There is a significant variance in levels of fuel poverty across the city. Some Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) in Coventry have 57% of households living in fuel poverty compared to others with as low as 3.9%. 5 LSOA's in Coventry have proportions above 50%. This is substantially higher than the national average of 13.1% and the average for the West Midlands of 18.5%.
- 2.5 A cold and damp home environment can result in a wide range of health impacts, including:-
- Condensation and damp in homes can lead to mould growth. Inhaling mould spores can cause the development or worsening of a wide range of respiratory conditions. In 2020, a landmark coroner's report found that two-year old Awaab Ishak died due to prolonged exposure to mould in his home.
  - Living in a cold home can worsen and increase the risk of heart disease and cardiac events. It can also worsen musculoskeletal conditions such as arthritis.

- Cold or damp conditions can have a significant impact on mental health, with depression and anxiety more common among people living in these conditions.
  - Each year, the NHS spends an estimated £1.4 billion annually on treating illnesses associated with living in cold or damp housing. When wider societal costs are considered, such as healthcare, that figure rises to £15.4 billion.
  - Cold homes and fuel poverty contribute to Excess Winter Deaths. It is estimated that 40% of excess winter deaths are attributable to cardiovascular disease and 33% are attributable to respiratory disease which are both conditions exacerbated by cold. The National Institute for Health Equity estimates that some 10% of excess winter deaths are directly attributable to fuel poverty and 21.5% are attributable to cold homes.
- 2.6 Coventry City Council has a longstanding commitment to delivering affordable warmth services to support vulnerable and fuel poor households.
- 2.7 The current focus is on adopting a population health management approach. The existing support schemes can be divided into two main groups:-
- 2.7.1 **Retrofit Schemes** – focused on tackling fuel poverty, supporting clean growth and reducing carbon emissions. Eligibility for these schemes is based on income and other factors such as the energy efficiency rating of a property and if a property is on or off mainline gas.
- 2.7.2 **Keeping Coventry Warm (Public Health) Schemes** – focus on reducing the health-related morbidity and mortality associated with living in cold homes and reducing the demand for health and care services caused by cold related ill health. Eligibility is based on income, vulnerability, disability and health criteria.
- 2.8 The service provider for the public health schemes is Act on Energy and the current contract is due to end on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. There is now an opportunity to re-design the programmes and look at how we can deliver more effectively from both a cost and quality perspective.
- 2.9 The existing funding of these schemes is through a variety of grants including Government retrofit grants, Energy Company Obligation (ECO) for medium / large energy suppliers, Public health grant, Integrated Better Care Fund (iBCF) and disability facilities grant funding. The continuation of funding is not guaranteed and in order to have a solid, long-term strategy for support, it is important to consider other funding sources.
- 2.10 A Population Health Management collaboration involving Coventry and Warwickshire ICB, UHCW and Public Health has been set up to investigate and demonstrate the health impact of cold homes. This analysis project links data from the NHS on health indicators (e.g. emergency admissions by LSOA, with fuel poverty, deprivation, EPC and housing data sets).
- 2.11 By pulling together multiple data sources we hope to better understand the local groups most affected by cold homes and the impact this has on their health and wellbeing and the demand for local health and care services. The benefits of this approach are multi-faceted. It will:-

- facilitate the tailoring and design of support services to meet the needs of the groups most affected.
- ensure promotion of schemes and support services is targeted to those most affected.
- strengthen the case for funding by highlighting the value of support services and projecting future benefits based on data and evidence.

- 2.12 The next steps of this programme of work are to carry out an appraisal of the existing provision of schemes locally benchmarking with other areas as well as identifying gaps and barriers to uptake. Co-production will be central, and energy suppliers, energy charities, voluntary sector groups, people with lived experience and commissioners will all be involved in this assessment.
- 2.13 As part of this new opportunities and funding streams will also be explored. This includes linking with the Council strategic energy partner (E.ON) and Community Energy Champions bid team and connecting with possible research opportunities facilitated by the Coventry Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC).
- 2.14 This comprehensive evaluation combined with the results from the Population Health Management Collaboration project will inform the re-designing and commissioning of new schemes.
- 2.15 The benefit of adopting a multi-faceted, population health management approach in delivering affordable warmth schemes in Coventry is expected to be significant. It will play an important role in helping to reduce the health inequalities that exist across the city.

### **3 Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

- 3.1 There are no specific recommendations or decisions for the Coventry Health Wellbeing Board. However, the board are requested to support the programme of work and endorse the approach presented in this report and presentation.

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