

Joint Public Health Board

7 December 2023

Dorset Home Upgrade Grant

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Jane Somper, Adult Social Care, Health and Housing,
Dorset Council

Cllr David Brown, Health and Wellbeing,
Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole (BCP) council

Local Councillor(s): All

Executive Director: S Crowe, Director of Public Health

Report Author: Jon Bird
Job Title: Service Manager, Growth and Economic Regeneration
Tel: 01305 221895
Email: jon.bird@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

The Healthy Homes Dorset initiative led by public health has worked across Bournemouth, Christchurch, Dorset, and Poole since 2012 to reduce morbidity and mortality caused or exacerbated by living in cold homes by improving home insulation and heating alongside advice and referrals to other sources of assistance including Livewell. The business model relies on maximising gap and match funding. £4.2 million has recently been secured to deliver Home Upgrade Grant in the Dorset and BCP Council areas. This is by far the largest single grant secured to date.

Recommendation:

That the Board:

- 1) Endorse the Dorset Home Upgrade Grant project

- 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to develop and deliver the project, in line with relevant Dorset Council regulations and any grant funding agreement with government.
- 3) Notes progress of the wider Healthy Homes Dorset initiative.

Reason for Recommendation:

Healthy Homes Dorset (HHD) is a key component of the Healthy Places programme of the Public Health Dorset Business Plan. HHD has been part of PHD delivery on the wider determinants of health to improve wellbeing, reduce health inequalities, and lower health and social care costs since 2012. The Home Upgrade Grant is by far the largest single source of external funding secured to date. Improving thermal efficiency of housing also contributes to BCP and Dorset Councils corporate priorities including sustainability, carbon reduction, housing standards, fuel poverty, air quality, and skills and employment development.

1. Report

- 1.1 Each winter there are approximately 500 avoidable excess winter deaths across Dorset and BCP council areas¹ and an estimated 4,000 related emergency hospital admissions, 16,000 related outpatient visits, and 16,000 related social care calls², most of which affect vulnerable older people and people with long term cardiovascular and respiratory conditions. Between a fifth and a third of these are estimated to be caused by cold homes. Living in a cold home is the second most significant factor for EWD: Only seasonal 'flu has more of an influence. HHD aims to reduce levels of avoidable illness and early death caused or exacerbated by living in a cold home, and the related avoidable demand for health and social care services by providing advice and improvements to home insulation and heating as outlined in NICE Quality Statement 3 of NICE Quality Standard 117 (Preventing Excess Winter Deaths and Illness Associated with Cold Homes).
- 1.2 From 2015 to 2023, the Healthy Homes Dorset (HHD) programme has provided advice to thousands of residents and improved hundreds of

¹ ONS Winter mortality in England and Wales [Winter mortality in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandlife/articles/winter-mortality-in-england-and-wales)

² "How to Reduce the Risk of Seasonal Excess Deaths Systematically in Vulnerable Older People to Impact at Population Level", Dept of Health, 2010 ([ref-11-seasonal-access-deaths.pdf](#) ²[\(wordpress.com\)](#))

homes to help reduce illness - predominantly circulatory, respiratory, and mental health problems - caused and exacerbated by cold homes.

- 1.3 HHD has consistently provided a stable offer which is simple to understand for referral agencies and residents, provided tailored advice, referred to other relevant organisations including Livewell Dorset, improved homes using match-funding for insulation and heating measures, and adapted its model as national policy evolved through better understanding of the issue (particularly the NICE Quality Standard and Guidance on Cold Homes).
- 1.4 HHD receives core funding from Public Health Dorset, commissioning, project and contract management by Officers from Dorset Council Place directorate through a periodically updated MOU and is overseen by a project board – the HHD Steering Group – with representation from BCP and Dorset Councils, and PHD officers and PHD secretariat support. BCP officers also liaise directly with DC officers and the commissioned delivery agents on policy, funding opportunities, communications and targeting.
- 1.5 HHD actively seeks match and gap funding for heating and insulation measures and acts as funder of last resort when external funding is insufficient or not available:
- 1.6 External funding rates and availability fluctuate constantly: in Financial Year 2022 nearly £7 of external funding was secured for every £1 of Local Authority funding. While FY 2023 was generally a poor year for external funding, £4.2 million was secured in principle from the Home Upgrade Grant 2 fund, and in October 2023 the project gateway to deliver the scheme to March 2025 was passed. This is by far the largest single grant BCP, DC and PHD have secured for this type of work. It will allow much more extensive – and costly – retrofit than previous offerings under HHD to about 300 homes.
- 1.7 Reprourement of the Healthy Homes Dorset delivery contract, with an increased budget of £5 million to allow delivery of HUG, was included in the procurement forward plan and approved by Dorset Council Cabinet on 28 February 2023.

2. **Financial Implications**

- 2.1 PHD funds the revenue elements described in NICE Quality Standard 117, *Preventing Excess Winter Deaths and Illness Associated with Cold Homes*, particularly Quality Statement 3: *People who are vulnerable to the*

health problems associated with a cold home receive tailored support with help from a local single point of contact health and housing referral service. The current budget for this provision is £50,000 p.a. Local authority funding and external funding, including the HUG2 funds, will pay for heating and insulation upgrades.

- 2.2 Since the Care Act places an obligation on Local Authorities to consider best practice, including NICE guidelines and quality standards, doing nothing is not considered compatible with the NICE guidelines and Quality Standards *Preventing Excess Winter Deaths and Illness associated with cold homes.*

3. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

- 3.1 Both HUG and HHD are designed to reduce Carbon emissions and are featured in BCP and DC corporate actions to reach net zero. (see appendices)

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

The proposal improves mental and physical wellbeing and recues health inequalities.

5. **Other Implications**

None

6. **Risk Assessment**

- 6.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: MEDIUM

Residual Risk: LOW

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Healthy Homes Dorset seeks to improve the homes of those people most vulnerable to the impact of cold and damp homes. The criteria include a range of considerations including vulnerabilities caused by age and specific health conditions.

8. **Appendices**

None

9. **Background Papers**

None