

7th January 2016		ITEM: 6
Health and Wellbeing Board		
Well Homes Project		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Louisa Moss, Housing Enforcement Manager		
Accountable Head of Service: Dermot Moloney, Business Improvement Manager		
Accountable Director: David Bull, Interim Director of Housing		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Housing is now explicitly referenced as part of the local authorities' new duty under the Care Act. It is defined as a 'health related service' and for the first time the suitability of someone's living accommodation is listed as part of the definition of well-being.

The care and support 'landscape' will continue to evolve, although the desire to establish the role of housing, in developing integrated care and support is likely to remain a constant. The Well Homes project has been nationally recognised as an example of 'integration in action', focused on what makes residents feel better at home.

It is a new approach to delivering housing services in the private sector and looks at a more holistic response to the full range of home based hazards. Through targeted partnership working to the most vulnerable residents, it tackles health inequalities caused by poor quality housing conditions and improves access to a wider variety of services, including local health services. The principle lead services are the Private Housing Service and Public Health. To date, 83% of Well Homes clients are reported as saying they feel healthier and safer at home.

Recommendation(s)

1.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board note the on-going progress made by the Well Homes project.

1.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board agree for the Well Homes project

to explore ways of finding ways of sustaining the project beyond the funding period (2015-2017) and to be an integral part of any new social care 'prevention' delivery programmes.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Well Homes project started in August 2014 and is a small operational scheme, operating with one Well Homes Advisor who is supported by a range of local partners. The project is focused on Thurrock's largest housing sector i.e. the private sector, with includes both owner occupation and private rented housing. The project defines a 'Well Home' as a healthy, safe and secure place to live.
- 2.2 The project grew out of a Health Impact Assessment carried out on Thurrock's private housing stock by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). The assessment provided information about housing risk, hazards, harm and costs and it is this information which focused the work of the Well Homes project: The key findings included at total of 8,500 severe housing hazards, the most common were:
- 3,000 Fall hazards
 - 2,000 Excess cold hazards
- 2.3 The Health Impact Assessment also calculated the real cost of poor private housing in Thurrock, for the most vulnerable residents, using the BRE's Housing Health calculator. This calculator measures the quantitative health impact of housing hazards, identified under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system, which is a process used by Private Housing Officers in their inspection work. The assessment found that if no work was carried out to reduce the total number of category 1 housing hazards in the private stock, the estimated annual cost to the NHS, for treating accidents and ill health caused by these hazards, would be £953,000.
- 2.3 With reference to the BRE's findings, a 'Thurrock Well Homes' index and mapping tool was developed, so that Lower Super Output Areas with the most housing-related need were identified, enabling the Well Homes project to target its work.

The Well Homes index

- 2.4 Thurrock's Well Homes index mapped the local data from the BRE assessment and from other government and health statistics, to include:
- Income, Health Deprivation and Disability
 - Living Environment
 - % Housing Benefit
 - % Households in Fuel Poverty
 - % Category 1 housing hazards e.g. falls
 - % overcrowding

- 2.5 In the second year, 2015-16, the 'Well Homes' index was reviewed with more emphasis on mapping those residents who were considered at higher risk of poorer health outcomes, and therefore are more likely to see an improvement to their health following a Well Homes intervention. The 'refreshed' index was set up to supports that group of the population, aged 65 and over, those with a respiratory, cardiovascular or mental health long term condition, or those on a low income.
- 2.6 To date (November 2016) the Well Homes project has reached 1739 people and carried out 653 Well Homes Assessments.
Appendix A details the Well Homes headline statistics (November 2015).
- 2.7 The Well Homes project is gradually building up its network and raising its profile, with the aim of increasing the referrals coming into the service, however, it currently remains a service that focuses its work in the 'hotspot' areas as determined by the Well Homes index.
- 2.8 The Well Homes assessment itself covers a range of home and health questions to determine whether specialist help should be sought from a wider range of partner agencies. Services available include energy efficiency checks, gardening, handyperson, adaptations, health checks, as well as a full housing inspection where serious hazards are identified. All these services are already provided by existing agencies, but the difference made by the Well Homes project, is that they are brought all together for the resident in 'one conversation', focused on what makes them feel better at home.
- 2.9 A full range of Well Homes offers have been set up and are used to support low income clients, to access services to reduce any identified home hazards e.g. electrics, boilers (excess cold), balustrading/steps/clearance (falls).
- 2.10 The Well Homes assessments are carried out by the Well Homes Advisor, who continues to be trained by the project's partners, to maximise the outcomes for residents. The training programme includes:
- Monetary advice and maximising income
 - Independent living knowledge and referral networks
 - Housing Health & Safety Assessment process
 - Community Safety, Crime prevention/Neighbourhood Watch, Domestic Abuse
 - Trading Standards - Bogus callers, loan sharks
 - Fire Safety and prevention with Essex Fire Service.
 - Making Every Contact Count (MECC)
 - Hate Crime Ambassador Accreditation.
- 2.11 100% of residents who have used the Well Homes service, thought that the WHA's knowledge was either very good or good.

The Well Homes Partners

- 2.12 The Well Home project has developed a referral network of individuals and agencies all experienced in working with vulnerable groups. Not only have they supported the training of the advisor, but these partners continue to provide a range of specialist support. Examples of these local partners include:
- Public Health, Private Housing, Social Care
 - Home Improvement Agency – Papworth Trust
 - Community Safety Partnership – through it strengthening communities work.
 - Essex Fire service
 - Local energy providers, contractors, electricians, builders
 - Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions – gardening/handyperson services
- 2.13 The partnerships in year 2 (2015-16) have developed further with the setting up of new integrated ways of working to include;
- The sponsorship of a Well Homes Apprentice who works with Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions. The sponsorship supports the apprentice to learn more about the Well Homes programme and to increase his housing knowledge, which will compliment his qualification in social care.
 - A new partnership agreement with Essex Fire and Rescue Service where all their home safety technicians have been trained to be Well Homes Advocates. To date, over 20% of the residents that have been visited by the fire service have been referred onto the Well Homes service, for further intervention work.
 - The Well Homes service is now part of the ‘housing offer’ for all domestic abuse clients and homeless prevention clients. This will enable our most vulnerable residents to gain further support and advice, on how to keep safe and well at home.

Well Homes ‘the detail’

- 2.14 Processes/procedures/reporting/evaluation outcome/letters/client packs/surveys/financial offers/discounts are all in place, which allows a consistent and clearly understood approach to the various work streams.
- 2.15 The data collected links into the JSNA and the analysis can then be compared with national statistics.

Well Homes ‘the recognition’

- 2.16 The Well Homes project was recognised in 2015 by the Kings Fund, NHS Alliance, the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health Officers and Strategic Excellence Network, as an example of ‘integration in action’ and

Thurrock through its Private Housing Service has showcased the project using both presentations and workshops. Information has also been shared with other local authorities who are looking at similar ways of working, including neighbouring Essex districts.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Funding

- 3.2 The operational arm of the Well Homes project is carried out by the Private Housing Service.

The funding arm of the Well Homes project 2014-2017, is Public Health. The annual cost of the service totals £45,000. The funding is used to commission a Well Homes Advisor and some limited administration support.

- 3.3 In addition to this revenue funding, Housing Renewal capital monies, which are ring-fenced to improve private homes, have been carried forward, to support the Well Homes project. The capital monies are critical to the scheme, so as to enable the continuation of the Well Homes financial offers, discounts and incentives, for the most vulnerable residents.
- 3.4 External funding continues to be explored for specific work e.g. The Office of the Police Crime Commissioner has already supported the Well Homes project through its National Initiatives Fund and provided £6,000 for the purchase and installation of security measures.
- 3.6 The long term success of the Well Homes project will be dependent on the need to continually raise awareness of the project outcomes, And to evidence the link between reduced hospital admissions/ GP spend and the project.
- 3.7 The Well Homes work over the last 15 months has reduced 137 housing hazards. The cost of the majority of the identified hazards are small e.g. lack of handrails to staircase (fall hazard), the harm is quickly reduced and the savings i.e. payback period for the NHS is quick. Using the BRE housing health calculator, as detailed in section 2.3, it has been estimated that the project has begun to reduce the costs to the NHS and has so far, saved the NHS, £290,555. This 15 month cost evaluation provides a value for money outcome, when compared with the annual funding costs of the service (£45,000).
- 3.8 A new Well Homes specification and outcomes performance framework was developed in 2015 resulting in the commissioning of a new Well Homes Provider. This new approach to service delivery has further increased the efficiencies of the service.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Well Homes project offers a prevention programme at a local level, where 71% residents who have used the service said it has improved their health and well-being. It deals not only with health and housing hazards in the home, but saves money and reduces the burden on the NHS and other public services.
- 4.2 The project has been operational for 15 months, but is already gathering momentum with 98% residents, who have used the service, telling us it is a good idea and 94% believing it will make a difference. The need to explore ways to increase the scale of the project and or embed its way of working into other work streams will support the new prevention duties of the Care Act.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 The project communicates with residents in the identified hotspot areas via letters and door to door visits. To date over 2,000 letters and visits have been made.
- 5.2 Wider consultation has and continues to focus, on raising awareness. Examples of local activity to date include:
- Web pages/Press releases/tweets
 - GP newsletters
 - Presentations/visits/outreach work
 - Team briefs to e.g./ LAC/Thurrock Mind/CAB
 - Local schools
 - Library
 - Children Centres
 - Thurrock Asian Association/ Eastern European retail outlets

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The Well Homes project compliments the Council's corporate priority 'improve health and wellbeing'. The Care Act implementation is a key priority for the Council and its prevention duties are a critical element of the Health and Social Care Implementation Programme.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis, HRA and Development Accountant**

Members are aware of the financial pressures that the Council is under at this time. As such, any project work must be kept within existing budget parameters and every effort to maximise third party contributions should be made.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall, Prosecution Solicitor
Legal Services**

There could be future legal implications, with the need to take enforcement action against rogue landlords. The Landlord's repairing obligations should be emphasised. Data protection issues should be considered and applied.

The Care Act, Guidance and Regulations contain statutory requirements that the Council will need to comply with and housing should continue to work with its partners and legal to assess the full implications of the Act.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren, Community Development and Equalities Manager**

Information gathered through the Well Homes project will be used to carry out a Community and Equalities Impact Assessment, which will help to ensure the project is accessible to all residents and is having a positive impact on communities. It should try to capture strands of diversity to better understand if there are implications in the Private Rented Sector which may be particularly disadvantaging certain groups within Thurrock.

Housing will continue to work with the Care Act Project and Engagement Groups to identify equality and diversity implications arising from the implementation of the Act in Thurrock.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- [J:\THURROCK\EXCHANGE\Well Homes](#): BRE Private Sector Stock Profile and Health Impact Reports

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix A: Well Homes Activity

Report Author:

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