

13th November 2014		ITEM: 8
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: Richard Parkin, Head of Housing		
Accountable Director: Barbara Brownlee, 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 and for the first time the suitability of someone's living accommodation is listed as part of the definition of well-being. Recognition of the inherent relationship between health, wellbeing and housing is a positive step forward and has underpinned the housing directorate's work for the preceding 12 months. Services are being reviewed, to ensure that the best use possible, is being made of all available resources in this area of work and the Well Homes Project is an example of how this can be done.

Well Homes 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. Housing quality and suitability is a major determinant of health and wellbeing and hence impacts on demand for NHS services. The principle lead services are the Private Housing Service and Public Health.

Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board note the progress made by the Well Homes project and the outcomes for residents.**
- 1.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board agree to endorse the continued funding of the Well Homes project in 2015-16.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Well Homes project is focused on Thurrock's largest housing sector i.e. the private sector, with includes both owner occupation and private rented housing.
- 2.2 The project grew out of a Health Impact Assessment carried out on Thurrock's private housing stock in 2012 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:
- 8,500 Total category 1 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.

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
 - Barriers to Housing and Services
 - Living Environment
 - % Housing Benefit
 - % Households in Fuel Poverty
 - Years of Potential Life Lost
 - % Non decent private sector homes
 - % Category 1 hazards- All and Falls
 - % overcrowding
 - Rate of Burglary

- 2.5 The index subsequently identified a range of 'hotspot' areas and in the first year of the project, 2014-15, this would cover a total of 1800 households covering the wards:
- Tilbury and Grays Riverside/Thurrock Park/West Thurrock/South Stifford.
- 2.6 The project commenced June 2014 in Tilbury Riverside.
- 2.7 Well Homes letters are sent in stages to each household, followed by door to door visits, by a Well Homes Advisor (WHA). The Well Homes target for 2014-15 is to achieve 400, one to one assessment visits. **Appendix A:** details the progress made up until September, including the range and number of referrals made.
- 2.8 The single Well Homes assessment 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, handy person, adaptations, health checks, as well as a full housing inspection where serious hazards are identified. These are all existing agencies that the Well Homes project has brought together and made more accessible to residents who previously may not have accessed them.
- 2.9 A new range of Well Homes financial offers have also been developed, to reduce all identified home hazards e.g. electrics, boilers (excess cold), balustrading /steps/clearance (falls). Housing renewal capital monies are used to fund these incentives.
- 2.10 The WHA has been trained by the project's partners, to maximise the outcomes for residents. The training programme included:
- Monetary advice and maximising income
 - Independent living knowledge and referral networks
 - Housing Health & Safety Rating System
 - Community Safety, Crime prevention, Neighbourhood Watch
 - 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. **Appendix B:** Survey findings.

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

Well Homes ‘the detail’

- 2.13 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.
- 2.14 The data collected links into the JSNA and the analysis can then be compared with national statistics.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Funding

- 3.2 The Well Homes project 2014-15, is funded by Public Health, totalling £45,000. The funding has been used to commission a Well Homes Advisor and some limited administration support. Further support is provided by the Private Housing Service, who take the project lead.
- 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 new Well Homes financial offers, discounts and incentives, for the most vulnerable residents.
- 3.4 The Well Homes funding is currently at risk, because the revenue funding is not a recurrent budget and the capital monies are cash limited.
- 3.5 External funding will continue to be explored for specific work, but will only maintain the project in the short –medium term. 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 prove the link between reduced hospital / GP spend and the project.

- 3.7 The Well Homes work over the last 3 months, has reduced over 100 housing hazards. The majority of these identified hazards are small e.g. lack of handrails to staircase (fall hazard), but the cost of reducing the hazard with the help of a Well Homes offer is small. The harm is quickly reduced and the savings i.e. pay back 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 and Society, £82,000. This 3 month cost evaluation provides a value for money outcome, when compared with the annual funding costs of the WHA (£45,000).

Options to expand Well Homes

- 3.8 The Well Homes project team are already exploring ways in which the scheme could be expanded and are beginning to pilot the following ideas:
- To extend the Well Homes process to all general private housing requests. It is anticipated this will enable a further 100 assessments to be completed for both private tenants and landlords
 - To work with the Housing Domestic Abuse officer to offer all residents who use the Housing Sanctuary Scheme, a Well Homes assessment. This will enable our most vulnerable residents to gain further support and advice, on how to keep safe and well at home.
 - To work more closely with Adult Social Care to improving the availability of generic information and advice across the community, and linking more to the Local Area Co-ordinators/Community Hubs/ABCD initiatives. To consider carrying out some focused work for older residents, with the option of using an 'well homes advocate, such as a registered provider, who may have residential or supported housing within the borough.
 - To work with Essex Fire and Rescue Service and using the skills of their community safety advocates
 - To work with GP surgeries and encourage them to become hubs for accessing housing help, offering the Well Homes project as an easy referral route for patients to be prescribed housing support quickly.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Well Homes project offers a prevention programme at a local level, where 69% residents who have used the service said it has improved their health and well-being (Appendix B).

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 less than 6 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 (Appendix B). A further one year's funding will increase the scale and coverage of the project and 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/information cards left locally include at:
 - Thurrock management teams/CAB/Family Mosaic/Thurrock Mind
 - Pharmacies and G.P.'s Surgeries.
 - 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: **Michael Jones**
Management Accountant, Corporate Finance

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: **David Lawson**
Deputy Head of Legal & Governance

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
- Appendix B: Well Homes survey outcomes.

Report Author:

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