



COMMUNITY



Hull City Council

Affordable Warmth Scheme

Hull City Council used its Household Support Fund (HSF) allocation to help households with the cost of living, particularly around food and home energy costs, in different settings, and in collaboration with a number of external partners. This case study outlines how the Affordable Warmth scheme helped residents reduce their energy use and also had further social outcomes. We worked with local boiler company Ideal Heating to secure social value funding to complement HSF, and charity National Energy Action (NEA) who worked with us on a part-commercial, part in-kind basis, providing free training for Hull Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) groups who support residents experiencing or at risk of fuel poverty.

Working across multiple service areas and with the local VCS infrastructure organisation, Forum, we ran a grants scheme for VCS organisations to fund affordable warmth activities. VCS groups were incentivised to undertake the NEA-accredited training in fuel poverty advice, and also incentivised to run their activities at times when other local facilities were less available, such as when the council libraries were shut. 34 organisations across the city, working with different client groups, received grants of £2,000 to £12,000, and activities ran from October to March. The VCS groups chose what would work best for their target demographic regarding affordable warmth. One supporting older people ran board games sessions in a Warm Space and gave out slow cookers. One assisting refugees bought warm clothing and held culturally appropriate food and film evenings. Over 6,000 households benefited over the winter, and with some households comprising multiple individuals, and many benefitting multiple times, the impact was huge. Using familiar settings and trusted partners meant that many households received fuel poverty advice informally when they accessed a Warm Space, participated in activities, or received goods to help reduce their home energy consumption. Many were signposted to further support and advice, meaning

their long-term situation improved, as they accessed services and benefits they were eligible for. Some residents may never have approached the Council for support, either because of the formality of approaching the Council, or a possible sense of stigma, whereas they felt comfortable using familiar community facilities, for example their mosque, centre for deaf people, or local community centre. Below are pseudonymised case studies highlighting the difference the Affordable Warmth scheme has made to residents.



Deaf Club gentle exercise class

1. Affordable Warmth project Back to Ours

“Family D” have engaged with our organisation for the past 2 years. They live nearby and visit a couple of times a week. The family comprises mum aged 42 who is unemployed, dad aged 48 who is unemployed and a wheelchair user and their 12-year-old daughter who has additional educational needs. Staff noticed the family were visiting more frequently and it emerged that this was due to their home being cold. As our relationship developed, mum opened up about her worries about paying her energy bills. We offered one-to-one advice based on their needs. They brought in their bills and our trained staff member talked through what the bills meant and how some changes in the home could reduce usage. They started the session looking quite concerned, saying that they must be doing something wrong, and by the end of the session they said they felt hopeful and more in control. This was just the start for Family D. Mum attended crafting sessions and received a slow cooker and electric blankets. Mum and Dad spoke to other families about their positive experience, sharing hints and tips for reducing energy use, and telling people how much items like a slow cookers and electric blankets cost to run. Their confidence has grown due to the control they now have, their bills have reduced because they aren’t using their heating as much, and as a family, they’re enjoying new ways of cooking warm, healthy

meals. Opening up and talking about the issues they were facing has also spilt over into other aspects of their family life.



Older resident receiving an Air Fryer

2. Affordable Warmth project Toranj Tuition

“Farah” is a recent arrival in the UK, coming from a warm climate and facing significant challenges adapting to her new environment. With limited English and no family in the UK,

she was isolated, struggling with the cold weather, and unable to access culturally appropriate food. Her situation was further compounded by her lack of understanding of the UK's energy costs. Through the project, Farah attended workshops on financial management and energy efficiency, gaining practical tips on keeping her living space warm without incurring high costs. These sessions were crucial in helping Farah manage her limited budget more effectively and reduce her anxiety over the cold winters. Additionally, Farah became a regular visitor to our warm space, where she could socialise, use the internet and computers, and access books. This not only offered her a refuge from her cold and solitary accommodation but also a place to connect with others and build a support network.

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