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| **CASE STUDY** | | |
| **Case study:** | WARMER WIGHT PLUS: Fighting Fuel poverty by helping people with their energy and water bills | |
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| **Purpose:** | | The WarmerWight Plus project is delivered by The Footprint Trust, a charity established on the Isle of Wight in 2002 to help people reduce their carbon footprint and enjoy more sustainable living This is achieved through a range of practical projects, including our work with those in fuel poverty.  The aim of Warmer Wight Plus is to help alleviate fuel poverty. The Isle of Wight is above the national average for percentage of households in fuel poverty with 14.9% compared to the average of 14.6%, some 15,000 Island homes (Source: Fuel Poverty and Excess Winter Deaths JSNA March 2014).  The Trust was awarded The Queens Award for Voluntary Service in 2013, in recognition of this work. We are recognised by DECC, the NEA and the IW Council for our innovative work in tackling fuel poverty |
| **How to works:** | | The Trust's experienced staff talk to people at outreach events and visit people in their homes, to give tailored guidance to households to help them use energy and water wisely. The 'Plus' of the project is the signposting to a network of support services, to help people get back in control of their lives; services such as AgeUK, the CAB, the Law Centre, Family Centres, the Foodbank, and Storeroom 2010, as well as health professionals such as Health Visitors and Occupational Therapists.  Tailored energy guidance is available to everyone anywhere on the Isle of Wight, but of the 3000 people seen around 38% could be defined as 'hard to help' ie. unsupported and struggling. These folk will not access websites or read leaflets, and will often need repeated help in order to resolve issues. They include the elderly, very young single parents, people with long-term conditions which require a level of warmth, or people who are working but are on very low wages.  By talking to people, then visiting them in their homes, and being available on the phone as back-up, the Trust’s experienced staff build a relationship of trust with the vulnerable person, and are therefore able to be effective in helping people keep warm and avoid fuel debt. |
| **Success so far:** | | One of the reasons The Footprint Trust has been able to access the ‘hard to reach’ is that people may be prepared to make initial contact about energy bills, but are less inclined to talk to anyone about the mental health issue which underpins the fuel poverty issue. The Footprint Trust may be perceived as being 'outside' the health professional cohort, which makes contact less serious or daunting. In addition, The Footprint Trust is seen at various events (such as Riverfest or outside supermarkets) so is well-known as part of the local community.  In 2013-2015, 2256 people were talked to in cafes, social clubs, talks to clubs and groups, Family Centres, sheltered housing, outside supermarkets and at ‘Monergy’ training courses run by The Footprint Trust – at venues from Freshwater to Brading, and Cowes to Ventnor. Of these people, 808 went on to have a home visit. In total, the Warmer Wight Plus project identified an estimated £105,011 of annual savings for these people (estimated fuel savings based on data from the Energy Savings Trust). Over the same period, the project cost just over £62,000 to provide.  The impact on individuals has been significant:-  *A and his family live in Freshwater. His daughter is severely disabled. When The Footprint Trust visited A in October 2014, he had night storage heaters which were not working properly, no hot water, and was carrying his daughter up and down the stairs every day. He felt this was an undignified way to have to treat his daughter, and although he had very low electricity bills - there was no heating on in the house - it was too cold for health. The Footprint Trust put A in touch with EON who provided a new gas central heating system for him, and gave general energy-saving guidance.*  *"You have helped to give us a lovely warm house. We have never been like this before; we can use the whole house now and it is more homely. We are spending more time together as a family. Both my daughter and I feel so much better now I'm not having to carry her up and down stairs - she is more independent and my back is improving!"* |
| **Lessons learnt:** | | Whilst 15% of home visits came from referrals from professionals and the health and social care network on the Isle of Wight (based on 2013-2015 data), this leaves the majority of people making contact with The Footprint Trust through self-referral or from The Trust reaching them at outreach events in the community.  High levels of adult illiteracy (at around 25%) and low levels of computer literacy make website and leaflet information inaccessible for many. This is especially true when people are under stress and forget where they have heard a piece of information, and may feel reluctant to go back to professionals for fear of looking inept.  The Footprint Trust’s approach of going out to people, and delivering a tailored home visit, is clearly effective both in terms of helping to resolve current issues, and supporting people to get back on track with their lives. However, the ebb and flow of funding means that The Footprint Trust spends a considerable amount of time on grant applications rather than delivery. What would have the most impact for vulnerable people is continuity of delivery, which in turn requires continuity of funding.  With a return rate of 170% (ie. £62,000 funding resulted in identifying £105,000 of annual savings for vulnerable people), funding the Warmer Wight Plus project delivers excellent value for money.  Research by Professor Christine Liddell has shown that for every £1 spent on tackling fuel poverty, 42p is saved by the NHS. (Source:  http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4\_EconomyEnergyandTourismCommittee/Inquiries/Energy\_Action\_Scotland.pdf) |
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