



Press Release

Warm Homes Save Lives Programme: tackling the growing fuel poverty crisis

Before the Coronavirus Pandemic it was estimated that Fuel Poverty afflicts at least 2.4 million households nationally, over a tenth of all homes, with 80% concentrated in the most energy inefficient homes.

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For 2018, regionally, an estimated 11.4% of all households are considered to be fuel poor, the second worst in England, with the actual average fuel poverty gap in the West Midlands calculated as £433 per home, the largest in England.

Fuel poverty is commonly considered to be a result of three factors: household income, unaffordable energy prices and energy inefficient homes. We also recognise that the lack of ability to cope is also fundamentally important.

Quote: “Tackling fuel poverty is not simply a money issue, although it is a root cause, but for people and households under pressure from a whole host of sources, it is providing means by which to cope and ultimately prosper. The new tool to help us manage our conversations with individuals (CRM – customer relationship management tool) will help identify those under pressure more rapidly and help deliver responses more urgently” Rachel Jones, Act on Energy.

With the subsequent considerable deterioration in economic performance, and accelerated job losses, the narrow gains made in previous years in tackling household fuel poverty are likely to be quickly reversed, as the economy contracts.

Through the Warm Homes Saves Lives Programme, part funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, a regionally focussed strategy to put the household at the centre of our fuel poverty response, is being developed and rolled out through



the autumn. As a first success, funding from Innovate UK has recently been secured to develop an innovative household management tool – the first of its kind in the country, that will combine people and property factors together. In addition, a new app will allow mutual aid groups, food banks and other community groups to quickly refer potential householders into the scheme for support.

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Quote: "Ramping up the crisis response to poor homes and broken heating systems within a plan for the energy efficiency of the whole house as quickly and effectively as possible is essential. This will deliver benefits not just to those under energy price pressures, but also through small scale retrofit operations providing much needed employment and business opportunities, at an aggregate regional level delivering a much-needed stimulus to growth. The CRM is intended to enable speedy identification of dwelling energy failings, then provide the physical retrofit plan and works to accelerate high quality, appropriate solutions whilst prioritising the immediate needs of those in fuel poverty." Rosemary Coyne, SHAP

The other key area of development is in working closely with Local Authorities and Housing Associations in the West Midlands to be able to access Covid-19 Government stimulus funding. 'Green grants' were announced in July as part of the Government's Covid-19 recovery package. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is inviting LAs, working with their local partners, to apply for the first £200m phase of funding to deliver £2bn of Green Homes Grants (GHG). The funding will be used to improve the energy efficiency of low income houses. Applications can be made until 1st September. The Warm Homes Saves Lives programme wants to ensure these are spent effectively on measures that will make a lasting impact on household's in fuel poverty, as well as helping to protect and generate new jobs.



Longer-term the Warm Homes Save Lives programme wants to put household investment on a more stable footing taking a whole house approach, using well-trained and competent local installers investing in our local economies, significantly reducing household energy costs, and significantly improving health outcomes, both physical health and mental health. And to achieve this, the programme is actively lobbying central Government, through the West Midlands Combined Authority, for further support, ideally in the Chancellor's autumn statement.

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Notes to Editor

1. The Warm Homes Save Lives Programme CRM is a joint-initiative led by Act on Energy, Marches Energy Agency and the Sustainable Housing Action Partnership (SHAP). The CRM (Customer Relationship Management) is designed to provide a critical component of the 3-year Warm Homes Saves Lives fuel poverty programme in the West Midlands, itself facilitated by the WMCA.
2. Funding for the CRM is fully supported by UKRI through Innovate UK as part of their Covid 19 response.