

# Managing Warmth for Mental Wellbeing: Under Consumption and Vulnerability

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# Overview

# Health and Cold Homes

- Estimated that cold homes cost NHS in excess of £1.36 billion annually (Koksharov 2007)
- Psychological symptoms, malnutrition, social isolation (Marmot Review Team 2011)
- Some studies indicate mental wellbeing increases after improvements (Eadson 2014, Gilertson and Green 2008)
- Boilers on demand – outpatients visits falling by a third (Carrington 2014).



LOTTERY FUNDED

Changes4Warmth

# This study

- Commissioned by Beat the Cold as part of evaluation of Changes4Warmth lottery funded project



# This study

- Qualitative interviews and focus groups
  - 11 **Service user** interviews by service users
  - **Service users** within Changes who have participated in and potentially benefitted from Changes4Warmth
  - **Volunteers** within Changes who have been activity involved in Changes4Warmth
  - **Staff and trustees** of Changes and Beat the Cold who were directly involved in Changes4Warmth



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## 'I was frightened to put the heating on.'

Evaluating the Changes4Warmth  
approach to cold homes and mental health

Graeme Sherriff  
March 2016



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## Changes4Warmth: Lessons Learned & Directions Forward

Graeme Sherriff  
December 2016



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# Mental health and cold homes

*Oh if it's cold you're miserable, I mean I've sat last winter and, you know, you want to stay in bed because you don't want to move... once you're in bed and you're warm.*

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# Mental health and cold homes

- *‘or you’re living in one room because you can’t heat the rest of the house up... I think that makes your mental health ten times worse’*



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# Mental health and cold homes

- *‘Because I was good at keeping my bills good, anyway – that’s something I always used to do, until I became unwell and then it went a bit out of the window there’.*



# Mental health and cold homes

- it is, it is distressing... it's frustrating because you feel like you're probably being taken advantage out of in some respect and you don't know how to, how to dig your way out of it.

# Changes4Warmth Approach

I says you can, you can sit and explain to me Jules and it will just go over my head, I says the best person you can speak to is my husband, and she took it out of her time for that extra hours to come and speak to my husband and I thought that was really good.

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# Changes4Warmth Approach

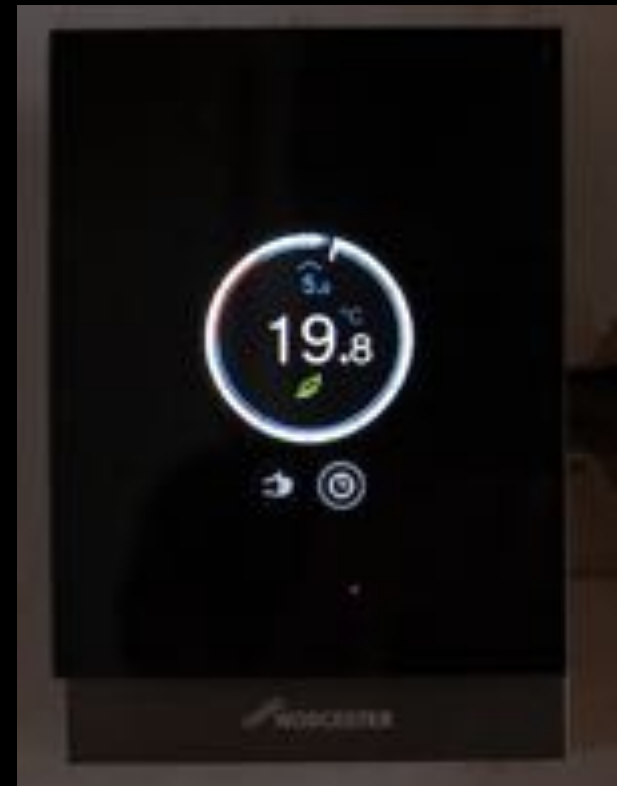
- ...if there was a major problem you could go back several times and the project allowed that without you thinking where's the funding coming for going now because I'm going back third, fourth, fth time?

# Impacts

- *been able have my heating on all the time, like from morning 'til ten and then the thing is I've also, same as [other service user], I'm also entitled to the disability, is it a hundred and forty, in't it, a year?*
- [the energy advisor's] going to help me get this £140 which, it just takes that worry off you.

# Changes4Warmth Approach

- *'I think it made me feel safe in the knowledge that I was on a best tariff I could be on...'*





- She said if you leave it on, it gets to a certain temperature and it doesn't use as much gas, it's just little tiny bits, just to keep at that temperature... I never thought of that that way.



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- it definitely has had a positive effect on helping me move forwards, and it still has now, just over 18 months on, it's still having that effect;

# Home Visits

- I think the home visit's good because when [the energy advisor] comes into your house you can see exactly what you've got, you do need that home visit because the thing is she walks around the house and she can say to you, oh well, you need a draught excluder here
- *'I am, I'm awful for that, I don't want anybody in my house, I don't, yeah. You don't give your address out or anything, don't you?'*

# Home Visits

- *‘easier for me to take that step back and, and realise that all they were doing was trying to help me’.*



# Home Visits

- ‘Yes, I need a bit of help – I won’t be frightened of admitting it now, put it that way.’
- ‘She got information out which I don’t think an ordinary person, a layperson could actually do it because they wouldn’t know the right way.’

# Delivering the project

- Building trust and embedding in the Changes network
- Involving volunteers



The poster features logos for 'LOTTERY FUNDED', 'BEAT THE COLD', and 'Changes Health & Wellbeing' at the top. The main title 'Changes4Warmth' is in large blue and orange font. Below it, text reads 'A FREE service for Changes members. Funded by the Big Lottery'. Two cartoon characters, a brown squirrel and a blue squirrel, are shown. The brown squirrel says 'Hi Flicker, how are your fuel bills?' and the blue squirrel says 'Not as low as yours Flicker, I need a home visit.' A central box titled 'Why have a FREE home visit?' lists several benefits: staying warm, saving money on fuel bills, speaking to energy companies, resolving disputes, claiming the Warm Home Discount, and learning skills. At the bottom, the phone number '0800 389 2258' and website 'www.changes4warmth.org.uk' are provided, along with contact instructions and registration details.

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## Changes4Warmth

A FREE service for Changes members.  
Funded by the Big Lottery

Hi Flicker, how are your fuel bills?

Not as low as yours Flicker, I need a home visit.

### Why have a FREE home visit?

- We can help you stay warm and well in your home
- We offer expert and independent advice supporting you to save money on your fuel bills
- We can speak to energy companies on your behalf
- We can help you to resolve difficult disputes with your fuel providers
- We can help you claim the Warm Home Discount
- We can support you to learn new skills and build confidence handling your fuel bills.

We also have exciting volunteering and training opportunities.

**0800 389 2258**  
[www.changes4warmth.org.uk](http://www.changes4warmth.org.uk)

Contact us now to book your FREE home visit and ensure you stay warm and well in your home

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Changes | Registered Charity Number 1144940 |  
Company Limited by Guarantee, Registered Number 7761177

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# Delivering the project

- *‘a massive learning thing from it, because the nature of their problems, their main target is to get better, and... when they get better or they're improving, they're off’.*

# Conclusions

- Cold homes and mental health: bidirectional relationship
- Changes4Warmth approach beneficial to service users: mental health recovery path
- Personalised, flexible approach of home visits
- Self-reliance v dependency
- Challenging and requires time
- Wider context: quality of housing
- Energy efficiency message for 'under consumers'



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