

Case Study: Warm Homes Fenland

Introduction:

The charity PECT aims to help preserve, protect and enhance the environment. We want to improve the quality of life of communities by raising awareness of environmental issues and nurturing behaviour change in future generations.

There is substantial evidence of the detrimental impact of fuel poverty on the physical and mental health of residents. Health impacts caused by cold homes include cardiovascular and respiratory problems, diminished resistance to infection, and increased levels of anxiety and social isolation.

Our Warm Homes project helps improve the lives of vulnerable households who are suffering from or at risk of fuel poverty. We support residents who are struggling to pay their energy bills or cannot keep their home at a sufficient temperature. We aim to reduce the numbers of people living with preventable ill health, and to help reduce energy usage and cut carbon.

PECT has carried out 1,000s of free household visits through its project 'Warm Homes'. The package of support has included: an 'Energy Pack' with information and goods relating to energy-saving, reviews on energy usage and tariff, advice on keeping homes warm and energy costs down, signposting to other support available such as the Warm Home Discount and Priority Services Register, and supporting residents with grant applications.

Our Warm Homes Project Officer explains why this project is so important: "It is essential to address the Fuel Poverty crisis. Huge numbers of homeowners are unable to adequately heat their homes, and this has significant health implications and places enormous pressure on the NHS. Our project ultimately seeks to tackle this growing issue by providing householders with a free helping hand to make their homes more energy efficient and to help save money on their energy bills."

The challenge:

In May 2019, local resident Amber was referred to PECT for a home energy advice visit by a Fenland District Council Housing Officer. The Housing Officer discovered that Amber was experiencing difficulties in paying her energy bills, which were extremely high, despite living in a well-insulated council house.

Amber was a relatively high energy user, tumble drying her clothes every day and using inefficient lighting. As a mother of young twins, Amber is not currently working and was only in receipt of income support. Almost 100% of her income was going towards her energy costs and she was having to make the daily choice between using her heating and feeding her family. As she was unable to adequately heat her home, she was also experiencing issues with damp in one of her rooms.

PECT's Warm Homes Project Officer provided Amber with a free home visit to discuss the situation and to find a way to help her move out of fuel poverty. PECT provided a holistic home visit to



address the three pillars of fuel poverty: low income, high fuel costs, and energy inefficiency. This involved carrying out an extensive survey to ensure that all the aspects were covered. During the home visit, Amber was also provided with a 'goodie bag', consisting of a Stay Well pack, information booklet, and leaflets on smart meters.

The results:

Amber was on a pre-payment meter, and whilst she wanted to pay via direct debit, her landlord wanted to stick with pre-payment. PECT's Warm Homes Project Officer switched Amber to a cheaper tariff with Boost, saving her £265 per year. This has the additional benefit of being a green tariff as well.

Amber was additionally provided with four LED lightbulbs for the property, saving up to £12 a year. She was also unaware of her eligibility for the Warm Homes Discount under the broader group. Unfortunately, applications had closed for the year, but she was signposted for the following winter period. This will save her over £140 over the winter months.

PECT's Warm Homes Project Officer additionally discussed energy saving tips with Amber, who learnt about the benefits of hanging her washing outside rather than tumble drying it, and about draught proofing her property. This will save her approximately £85 annually.

To take pressure off Amber, PECT's Warm Homes Officer also applied on her behalf for the Stay Well Grant, offered by Cambridgeshire Community Foundation. Amber was ultimately rewarded with £250 to cover her energy costs.

Key achievements:

-  Overall Amber's energy bill was reduced by £265 per year through switching. With an application to the Warm Home Discount, this will total £405.
-  The Stay Well grant provided her with £250 towards her energy bill.
-  Through changing behavioural habits, Amber will save £85 per year.

Her total savings reach £740 per annum.

Feedback:

"Honestly, just thank you so much for your help. I really appreciate it. It has taken such a huge pressure off of me and I am now able to support my family better in other ways." – Amber

For more information: Call PECT on 01733 568408, email warmhomes@pect.org.uk or visit the website at www.pect.org.uk.