

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 June 2019, local resident David was referred to PECT for a home energy advice visit by the Wisbech Foodbank. They had received a phone call from David asking if the Foodbank supplied fuel vouchers, and this was how they discovered that he was having trouble paying his energy bills.

Our Warm Homes Officer arranged a home visit with David to see how PECT could support him. During this visit it was discovered that David wasn't a high energy user but that he was experiencing difficulties paying his fuel bills due to his low-income and the fact that he wasn't in full time employment due to a disability.



The results:

The first step was to register David's interest in the national £140 Warm Homes Discount, which will support him to pay his bills over the winter months. Whilst this application wasn't yet open at that time, a letter and application form will be sent upon its opening. Our Warm Homes Officer will subsequently help him apply for this.

To increase the heat retention in David's terraced house, radiator reflector panels were provided as well as seven LED lightbulbs for all his light fixtures. These are projected to help save him £37 per year.

Our Warm Homes Officer also discussed energy saving tips that will help lower David's bills. Due to David's difficulty with managing his Universal Credit, he was referred to CHS Group's New Horizon's Project. This will provide David with one-to-one support for up to 20 hours and help him develop budgeting skills. His coach will additionally support David in an application for Personal Independence Payment which could add an extra £234.80 to his income. This will help him with some of the extra costs of having a disability.



Key achievements:

-  Overall David's energy bill is expected to be reduced by £37 per year through small home improvements.
-  An application to the Warm Homes Discount will save a further £140.
-  Through changing behavioural habits, David could save £142 per year.
-  Through working with New Horizons Work Coaches, David will hopefully receive a successful application to PIP benefit.

David's energy cost savings are projected to reach £319 per annum with a potential additional £234.80 of benefits, reaching a total of £553.80.

Feedback:

"Thank you for your help, any help is appreciated, and these savings will hopefully stop me from having to make the choice between feeding myself and heating my home." – David

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