



## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD: 5 DECEMBER 2013**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL**

#### **EXCESS WINTER DEATHS IN BLABY DISTRICT**

##### **Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an example of locality working in Leicestershire for the Health and Wellbeing Board.
2. Key stakeholders in this example are the County Council's Director of Public Health, Blaby District Council and Blaby locality partners. This aim of the locality work was to investigate why Blaby District experienced:
  - a. significantly higher levels of excess winter deaths from 2004 to 2011 compared to England for Coronary Heart Disease and Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease; and
  - b. significantly higher overall excess winter deaths for 2007-10, compared to England.

##### **Background**

3. Current national strategies on Affordable Warmth encourage integrated working to maximise the use of limited resources. Blaby's local strategies deliver comprehensive services targeted at those individuals the evidence suggests are at greatest risk. However, the resources and capacity for this agenda are limited.
4. The evidence for successful interventions which might be considered for Blaby includes:
  - the 'nudge' approach: would help most people improve their general health outcomes and risks during winter months through encouraging general, sensible living and adapting different behavioural patterns for coping with cold weather.
  - targeted interventions: promoted through multi-agencies or organisations should improve vaccination up-take, access to healthcare for prompt treatments and using affordable warmth initiatives.
  - improving housing stock for both private rented, owner occupied and social housing.
5. People are more likely to die during the winter (December to March) than at any other time of the year. These are referred to as excess winter deaths (EWD) and they are a ratio of the proportional difference in deaths from the same population at different times of year.

6. EWD are not an inevitable part of living in a cold climate and they are predominately related to the ability to keep warm in colder seasons and are increased by underlying social inequalities.
7. Many people at risk already have an underlying frailty or health condition but are not expected to die from it at that time. Whilst EWD are usually few in numbers, they are mostly avoidable, premature deaths.

### **Risk factors for Excess Winter Deaths in Blaby**

8. A full analysis of known (evidence based) risk factors for excess winter deaths in Blaby identified:
  - No individual ward was at greater risk of excess winter deaths from 2004 to 2011, based on the analysis conducted for this report.
  - The District does not have a significantly older population (18%) compared to Leicestershire.
  - A small proportion of households (1.3%) without central heating compared to Leicestershire and the East Midlands – however, this still equates to 500 households in Blaby.
  - Significantly lower levels of fuel poverty and low income households compared to Leicestershire and England – however, this still equates to 5,634 households in Blaby.
  - There is a low risk of poor air quality or permitted industrial processes\* contributing to excess winter deaths in Blaby. (\*Industrial activities that require a permit to operate issued by the local authority or Environment Agency under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2010 to reduce any pollution they may cause and, in particular, to help improve air quality).
9. Factors that may have enhanced the risk of EWD in Blaby include:
  - Higher levels of under-occupancy, which means people may not be heating the whole house and thus may not be efficiently using their heating systems.
  - A significantly higher proportion of people with undiagnosed Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), COPD and Asthma than would be expected. These individuals are at greater risk of excess winter deaths than those people with a diagnosis and receiving appropriate chronic disease care.
  - Significantly lower levels of flu vaccination up-take for those at-risk and under 65 years compared to England.

### **Recommendations**

10. The Health and Wellbeing Board are asked to note the following actions which were taken in Blaby District in response to the data on excess winter deaths in Blaby:
  - 'Keeping Well this Winter' booklet led campaign in Blaby delivered through general and targeted distribution channels: this includes information on top tips on keeping warm, promoting the new NHS 111 phone number, encouraging up-

take of flu vaccine, New Housing Grant to improve heating in the home and the Green Deal (energy audits for residents). (See attached final draft leaflet)

- Increasing diagnosis rates:
  - COPD: endorsing the East Leicestershire and Rutland CCG Long Term Conditions work, part of which is to increase case findings and prevalence of COPD.
  - CHD: promotion of the GP delivered Health Checks Programme, a systematic structured programme to identify people at risk of developing Cardiovascular Disease in the next ten years.
- Health and social care working to support the same 'at risk' groups and sharing messages to provide a seamless package of service designed to support and protect the most vulnerable, for example affordable warmth is promoted to patients who are presenting for their flu vaccination.
- Cold Weather Plan: The Director of Public Health was involved with and consulted on the Cold Weather Plan for Leicestershire County Council. The work on WSD in Blaby District and the recent Health Profiles 2013 have led to discussions which have highlighted the need for a Leicestershire EWD Health Needs Assessment in 2014.
- Private sector housing: the private sector housing can now access grants for home improvements such as the Green Deal.
- Public Health Responsibility Deal: working through existing channels for the Responsibility Deal provide local winter health messages to working age people relevant to them and elderly relatives.

### **Publicly accessible background papers**

(A full list of references and literature review is available upon request)

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-of-energy-climate-change/series/fuel-poverty-statistics>
- ONS Excess Winter Mortality in England and Wales, 2010/11 (Provisional) and 2009/10 (Final)
- ONS 2011 Excess Winter Mortality in England and Wales, 2010/11 (Provisional) and 2009/10 (Final)
- The Eurowinter Group (1997) Cold exposure and winter mortality from ischaemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, respiratory disease, and all causes in warm and cold regions of Europe. The Lancet, May 10, 349(9062) pp1341-6.

### **Equality and Human Rights Implications**

11. As highlighted in the evidence reviewed in the full EWD report for Blaby District, demographic factors contribute heavily to population risk of excess winter deaths mainly due to social inequalities. In address risk factors for excess winter deaths this work also contributes to helping reducing social inequalities.

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