



Agenda Item: 4

PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a remote meeting of the People and Communities Policy Committee of South Norfolk District Council held on Thursday 11 February 2021 at 2.00pm.

Committee Members Present: Councillors: D Bills (Chairman), S Blundell, V Clifford-Jackson, J Easter, F Ellis, T Holden and N Legg

Apologies for Absence: Councillor: J Hornby and J Wilby

Cabinet Member Present: Councillor: Y Bendle

Officers in Attendance: The Assistant Director of Individuals and Families (M Pursehouse), the Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager (K Gallagher) and the Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager (R Dunsire).

20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr D Bills declared an 'other' interest by virtue of being a District Councillor for the parish of Bawburgh.

21 MINUTES

Subject to minor amendment, the minutes of the meeting of the People and Communities Policy Committee held on 8 October 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

22 REVIEW OF BAWBURGH TEMPORARY STOPPING PLACE FOR GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

The Assistant Director of Individuals and Families presented the report on the review of the Bawburgh Temporary Stopping Place (TSP) for Gypsies and Travellers, which provided members with the background on the TSP and its

previous closure. He highlighted the proposed action in addition to other options available to the Council.

In response to queries, the Assistant Director informed members that it was not a legal requirement to provide TSPs, however they were a useful tool when needing to move on unauthorised encampments. Members noted that both North Norfolk and Breckland Councils utilised TSPs, however there was no provision in the Norwich City and Broadland District Council areas. The Assistant Director advised that in the previous year, Broadland District Council had needed to deal with 200 unauthorised encampments, which had involved a considerable amount of officer time and funding. He also confirmed that central government was due to consider legislation to bolster police powers to disperse unauthorised encampments.

Members expressed concerns regarding the history of the site, and one member commented on the expense to the Council over the years and the limited benefit to residents. Members referred to the site being used by illegal waste carriers, for the dumping of waste and the Assistant Director confirmed that an investigation had been undertaken by enforcement officers, into the issues of waste dumping at the site. Members suggested that there was a need for more education and public awareness regarding illegal waste carriers operating in the district.

Members queried the funding of the proposals and the Assistant Director explained that the £125K capital budget would be used to fund the clean-up operation and necessary re-design work, with core budgets being utilised to fund the architect fee. He assured members that a full cost analysis would be prepared in advance of Cabinet making a final decision.

During discussions, members were informed that the proposed improvements to the site would provide more security and that an improved management plan would ensure sufficient contact with the travellers staying at the site. The Assistant Director reassured members that lessons had been learnt and that the proposed actions outlined in the report were an opportunity to make real improvements.

Members supported the proposed improvements, and the modernisation of the site, but stressed the importance of effective management, the need to engage with the traveling community, Bawburgh Parish Council, the local community, and the need to consider best practice elsewhere.

RESOLVED

TO RECOMMEND TO CABINET

The improvements outlined in this paper and the modernisation of the Bawburgh TSP site, as a precursor to the TSP re-opening

23 FUTURE POLICY DISCUSSION FOR COVID RECOVERY

The Assistant Director Individuals and Families introduced the item, which provided an update to members regarding the current operational work that was being completed to support the pandemic, and to inform future policy discussion around emerging issues for residents and communities.

Officers delivered a PowerPoint presentation to members (appended to these minutes), detailing the current and possible future areas of work in the following areas:

- Communities and the Help Hub
- Housing and Benefits
- Housing Standards

Discussion followed, during which the Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager confirmed that mental health issues had become more common since the first lockdown, especially in younger people, and she explained that the Council was working with the Princes Trust and engaging with the Youth Advisory Board, with a view to providing more support for lower level mental health cases in young people. In response to a query, she also advised that the Council's domestic abuse specialists in the Hub had been extremely busy, and she assured members that staff were fully trained in spotting the signs and providing support where it could. Members noted that the Council continued to work with relevant partners in this area.

In response to a query regarding mutual aid groups, the Help Hub and Communities Senior Manager explained that these groups were made up of volunteers, and that some had been in existence pre-Covid, with some being formed as a result of the pandemic. These groups were providing support to local residents throughout the pandemic, for example by doing the shopping, or walking the dog, where the resident was unable to do so themselves. Members noted that these groups had assisted in building resilience within communities and officers agreed that Covid had been a springboard to working with a whole range of new and different organisations and volunteers, and that there was a real opportunity to build on those relationships in future. She agreed to forward a list of the local mutual aid groups on to members.

Members were pleased to note that the future of the District Direct and Social Prescribing schemes were now more secure as they had attracted future funding from the NHS and Norfolk County Council. Members felt this was in recognition of the real positive impact these schemes were having on the lives of residents.

In response to a query on how the Council could make a real difference to those suffering from mental health issues, or long-covid, the Assistant Director explained that the Council could assist through its social prescribing service, with the more practical elements, such as housing. He acknowledged that this was only part of the package of help that was required, and that some issues could only be addressed through qualified health care professionals.

One member expressed his frustration with the lack of professional health care support in such areas. Another member explained that a resident in her ward who was suffering from long covid had very much benefitted from the help provided through the local mutual aid group.

Referring to the measured performance of the Benefits Team, one member queried what weight was put on qualitative data. The Housing and Wellbeing Senior Manager assured members that customer service was the prime driver, not performance indicators, and that the outcome for residents was the real focus for the team. Accuracy checks were regularly carried out, the regularity of which depended on the nature of the work and experience of officers.

Members noted that the Covid pandemic had highlighted an increasing number of new vulnerabilities, and they agreed with the importance of recognising the longer-term impacts on communities as the country came out of lockdown, such as redundancy, evictions and homelessness.

The Chairman referred to the hard work, dedication, and adaptability of all officer teams involved in delivering services to residents on behalf of the Council. It was then

RESOLVED

To note the information presented.

(The meeting concluded at 3.59 pm)

Chairman

People and Communities Policy Committee 11 Feb 2021

Updates to inform future policy

Context for update report

- Move away from simply signing off new policy reports. Policy committee should be developing policy areas.
- Inform panel of performance, barriers and risks of services around wellbeing
- Encourage discussion around current and future policy / practice areas.

Communities and help hub

COVID Response:

- Enhanced Test and Trace began on 7th January – In the first full week of operation (W/C 11-1-21) 1167 contacts were visited in 629 households. The rate of contacts referred from PH remains constant at between 190 and 260 a day. The service operates seven days a week.
- Continuing to work with mutual aid groups to support customers on the ground
- Help Hub open at the weekend again – a steady flow of calls the last couple of weeks. Remains open until 10pm weekdays
- Hospital Discharge work is enhancing the District Direct Offer at NNUH.
- Supporting vaccination centres with staffing and volunteers
- Very low emergency food demand. Most residents appear to have their own systems in place now.

Two Councils - One Team

Key Projects:

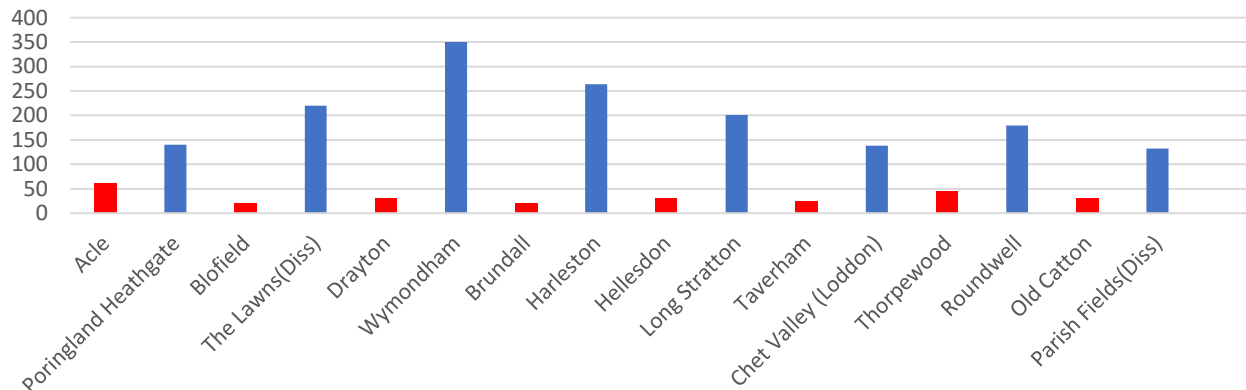
- The employment project Work 4 All is now taking referrals
 - working in partnership with Job Centre Plus,.
 - Support residents recently made unemployed, including those who have lost their jobs due to Covid19.
 - Assess customer's employment barriers and wider support needs and help them to access employment and retraining opportunities through a bespoke employment plan.
- Sport England bid in collaboration with Active Norfolk was successful. We received £10k to build 5,000 Active at Home packs to distribute.
- DAT team

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Community involvement

- Building on door stepping / mutual aid support / community groups
 - Community links – CIO
- Connecting with communities – a refreshed approach
 - Community connectors
 - Social prescribing -agreed four year funding package

Comparitive Referral Rates from Practices in Broadland and South with Similar Patient Caseloads (Numbers)



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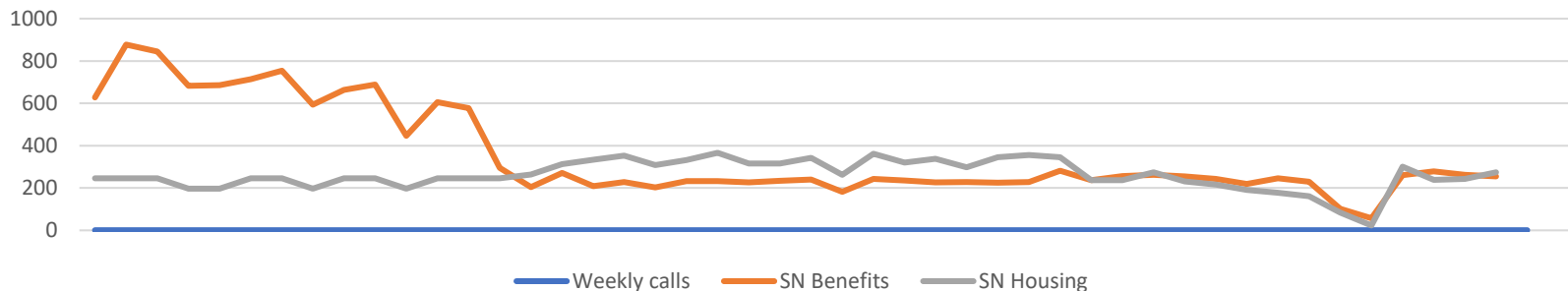
Housing and Benefits

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COVID Response:

- **£500 Test and Trace isolation payment** - can be claimed by those who have been told to self isolate and will lose income as a result. This has now been extended until 31st March. SNC has been allocated additional money for the discretionary payments. 29,893.41
- **Covid-19 Hardship Fund.** £43,970 awarded so far
- **Housing phone system** is being changed, options are being added
- **£250.00 heating payment** put into place
- **Temporary Accommodation** rates at a more sensible level, however seeing more immediate homeless in line with previous TA. Demand projection being completed

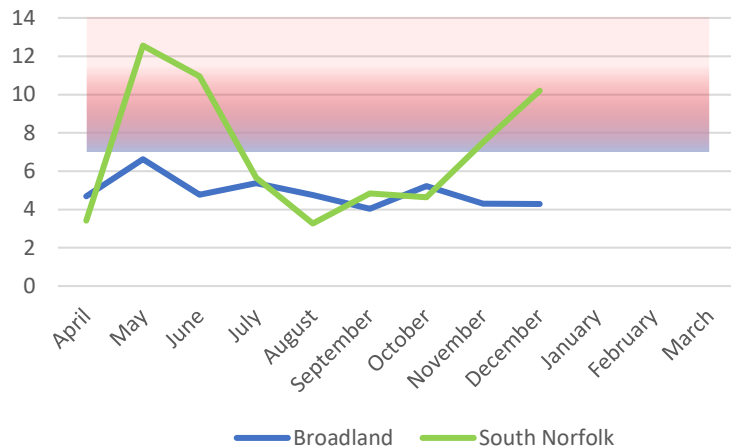
Calls into service



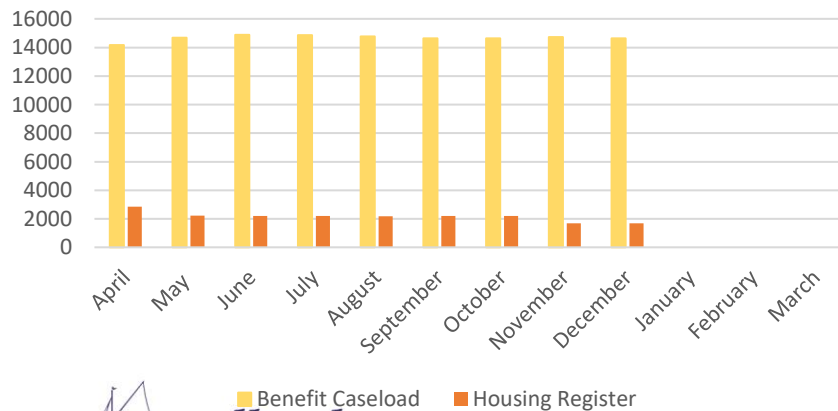
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Benefits

Benefits Speed of Processing
Target <7

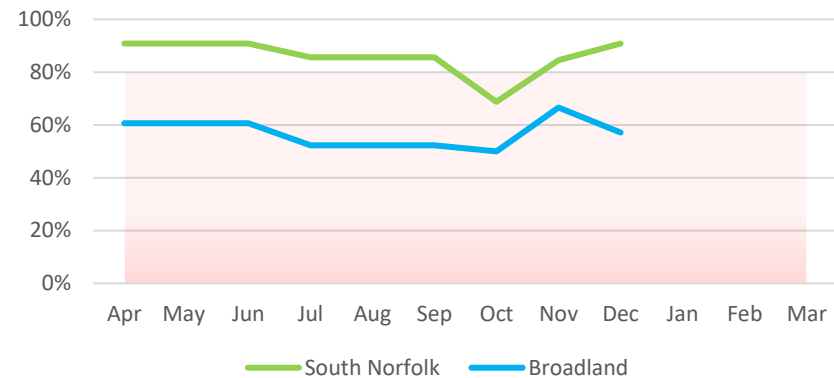


Customer Base

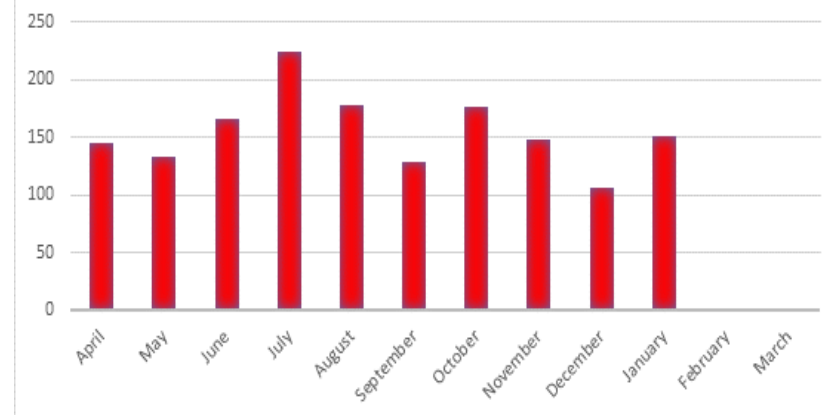


Housing

Successful Intervention to Prevent
or Relieve Homelessness
Target >80%



HSO NEW CASES



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Performance:

Benefits

- There has been an increase in new claims of 120% for this financial year, however the Benefit team have managed to stay within in processing target on average over the year, due to the changes made to the Council Tax Reduction scheme this year, and a change to how the work is distributed.
- The benefit team are once again under quite a bit of pressure, the continuation and administration of new initiatives such as self isolation payments placing a further burden.

Housing

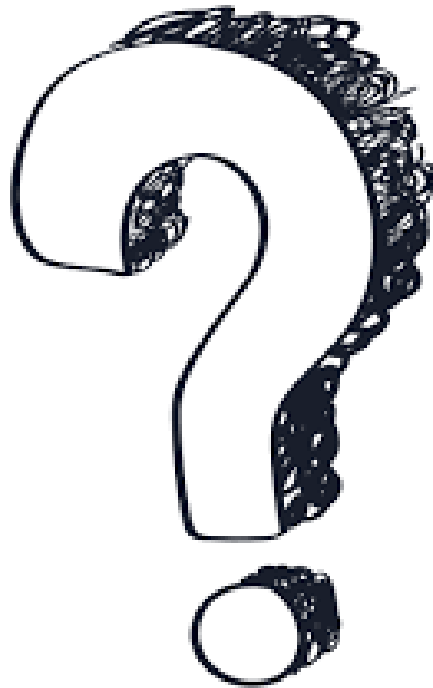
- Demand remains very high – expected to continue for sometime.

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Best in class housing rollout – complete so far

- New IT system in place for April 2021
- 1 system = 1 team, help with caseloads and resilience
- Housing register review underway = only residents with genuine need will be on register, more support for the right people

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Housing Standards

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Top 3 Key Performance Indicators:

- Assisting residents to live independently in their homes
- Supporting those at risk of fuel poverty
- Number of first time central heating installations

Narrative against Key Performance:

- Full year target to assist 100 residents with independent living. It is estimated that this will be through 100 DFGs although some diversification has been introduced with additional external finance. Since the beginning of April, we have completed 50 DFGs in privately owned/rented homes and 22 in Saffron properties, as well as 3 Dementia Grants.
- Full year target to support 600 residents at risk of fuel poverty in Norfolk. This is through interventions carried out by the Warm Homes Team as well as additional grants offered by the Housing Standards team. Since April, 317 residents have been supported. This is behind target due to the COVID pandemic.
- Full year target of 100 first time central heating installations through the Norfolk Warm Homes Partnership. Since the beginning of April, a total of 139 systems have been installed of which 28 are in South Norfolk. This funding is now fully committed the final installs expected to be completed soon.

Key Projects:

- Disabled Facilities Grants and other grants funded through the Better Care Fund
- External funding: Warm Homes Fund & Green Homes Grants

COVID Response:

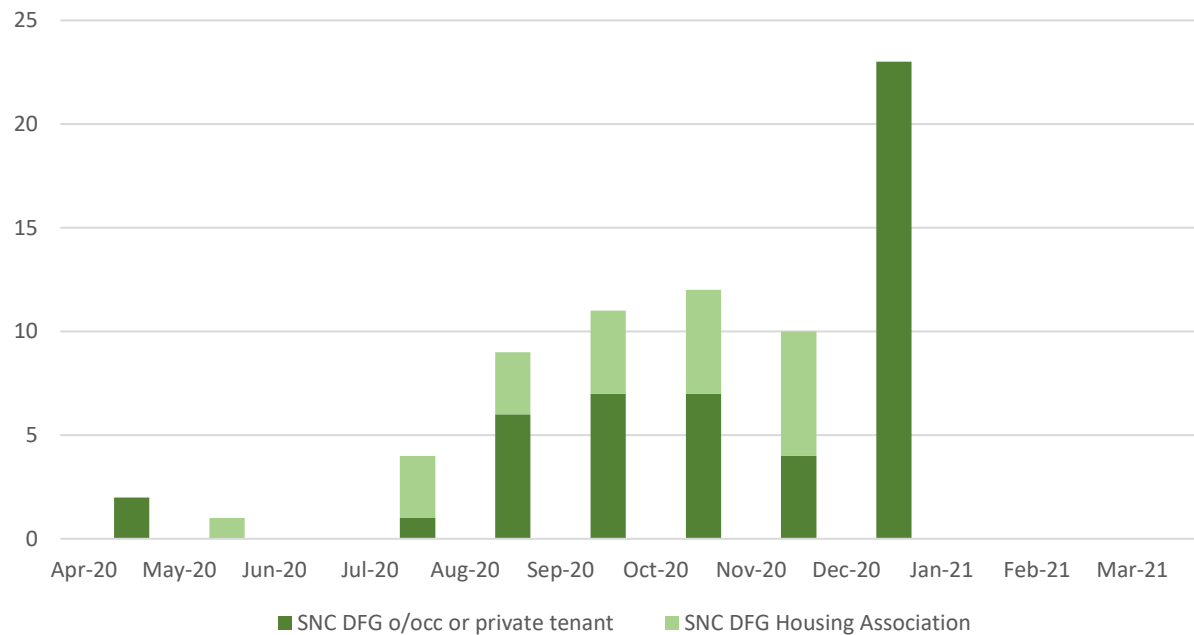
- All contractors working with the Housing Standards and Warm Homes Teams have completed and returned risk assessments which have been checked and retained on file. All work completed since the most recent national lockdown has been reviewed, ensuring that our procedure highlights the importance of risk assessments, as well as liaising with contractors to ensure they are also in line with all current guidelines.
- All residents are required to completed a declaration prior to any visits or work being completed in their homes. This confirms they have not tested positive, do not have symptoms and have not been told to isolate.
- Remote/virtual appointments are carried out where possible, and face to face contact time is kept to a minimum.

Risks & Challenges:

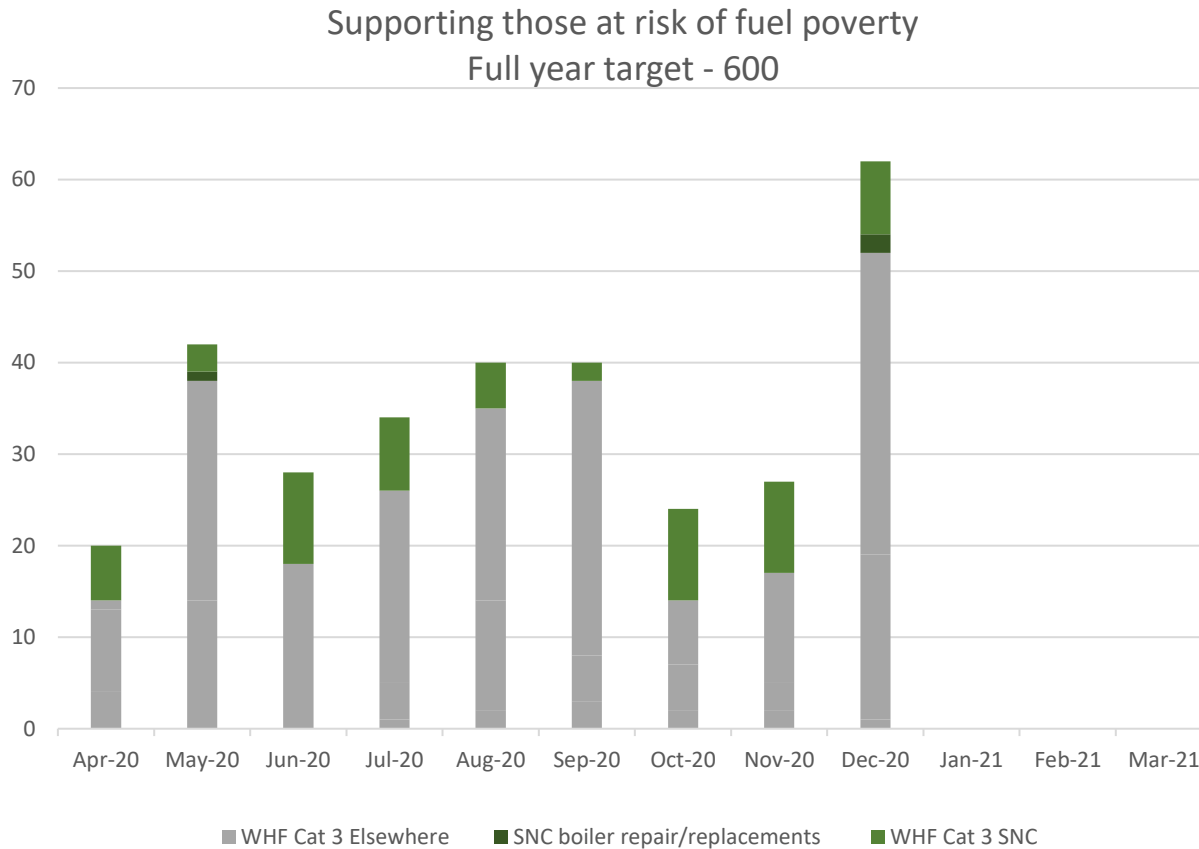
- The vast majority of housing standards work relates to clinically vulnerable and extremely vulnerable residents, therefore any restrictions impact massively on the delivery of the service.
- The funding available for first time installations has now been fully committed.

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Assisting Independent Living
Full year target - 100

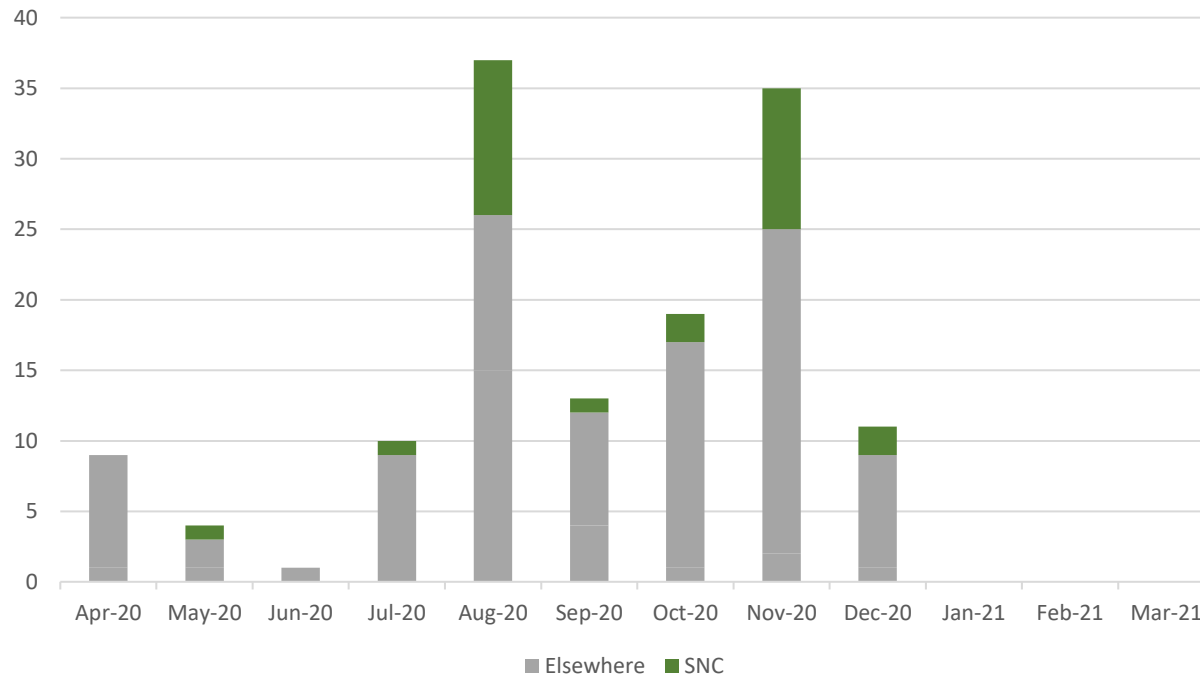


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Warm Homes Fund - First time installs
Full year target - 100



New DFG interim approach

Scheme 1 **Fuel Poverty Grant**

Scheme 2 **DFG Contribution Grant**

Scheme 3 **Top Up Grant**

Scheme 4 **Get You Home Grant**

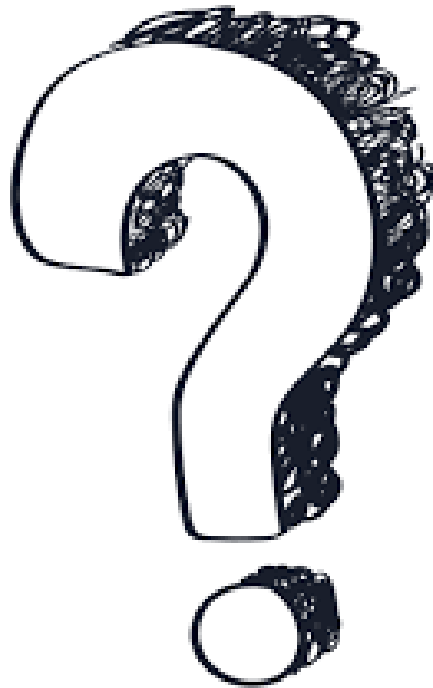
Scheme 5 **Serious Illness Grant**

Scheme 6 **Post-COVID Syndrome Grant**

Scheme 7 **Mental Health Grant**

Scheme 8 **Carer Support Facility**

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Summary of potential areas to explore: Does this resonate with members?

- Mental wellbeing
- Housing
- Employment
- Domestic abuse
- Community development
- Loneliness and isolation
- Hospital discharge and admission avoidance
- Home adaptation

Forward work plan

- | | |
|---|------------|
| • Discretionary enforcement | April 2021 |
| • Re-design of integrated housing and adaptations | May 2021 |
| • Community Wellbeing offer | June 2021 |
| • Hospital discharge | 2021/2 Q2 |
| • Skills / employment | 2021/2 Q1 |
| • Housing and complex cases | 2021/2 Q3 |
| • Council tax assistance | 2021/2 Q3 |
| • Health and wellbeing strategy | 2021/2 Q4 |