

WARMER CANTERBURY

A forum to ensure an integrated approach to winter warmth initiatives in Canterbury

INTRODUCTION

Warmer Canterbury is a forum which aims to ensure an integrated and efficient approach to winter warmth initiatives in the Canterbury region. The forum was established following the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes, at a time when multiple agencies were working to respond to the needs of many people living in damaged homes during winter.

Stakeholders identified three priority areas for action around winter issues:

- Tenants and tenanted properties
- Fuel poverty
- Vulnerable populations

Positive progress was made in these areas, largely through supporting existing agencies to achieve greater reach and impact of initiatives.

The forum managed the large amount of information in the community and ensured it was not duplicative or confusing. Clear and consistent messages were made available for the community about what could be done to keep warm in the winter and supports that were available. The breadth of forum membership ensured that there was no duplication and services were well linked up.

Warmer Canterbury sits under the umbrella of Healthy Christchurch, an intersectorial collaboration of over 200 signatory organisations, led by the Canterbury District Health Board.

EVALUATION

Formal evaluation of the initiative was undertaken following winter 2012 and a further survey was carried out in 2014 to assess the ongoing value of the forum. Findings clearly identified the value of direct support provided and the ongoing strength of the networks that formed.

Results showed the initiative was successful in;

- Ensuring collaboration
- Joining of resources and support for existing and new programs
- Combined messaging, and strong networking

The main reason for success was attributable to the connections made between agencies, which enabled sharing of information and reduction in duplication of effort. While agencies may have previously been aware of each other, the increased level of collaboration through Warmer Canterbury allowed programs to be improved. For example, an existing program of work between the CDHB and Christchurch City Council that focused on improving insulation gained additional partners, this enabled barriers to success to be identified and solved. In another example, Community Energy Action, a strong NGO with a focus on keeping homes warm and dry made key linkages through this forum that enabled them to provide more comprehensive support to the community and meant duplicative services did not 'pop up'. By linking up with Red Cross they could support available grants to be delivered, they were also a key agency for delivering on winter quick fix campaigns. They could ensure strong referral to other services as part of this where necessary. These relationships are now strongly cemented and ongoing.

OUTCOMES

Warmer Canterbury has achieved a lot since its establishment;

- Better links and relationships now exist between community organisations and both local and national government agencies.
- The reach of Red Cross grants for Winter Assistance, Winter Packs and others was extended.
- Three information leaflets were produced in a range of languages including Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Samoan to ensure messages reached all Canterbury communities.
- The combined messaging agreed by all agencies meant that community members got the same advice no matter which agency they connected with. Thousands of brochures were circulated, advice was given at community events, delivered through the Red Cross and available in health and social service agencies.
- A directory of winter support services was produced.

Today, the original purpose of Warmer Canterbury has been achieved; consistent messages are in place and agencies are strongly linked. There is now a planned process underway to close the forum while ensuring key aspects that need to continue are imbedded in relevant agencies.

HOUSING AND HEALTH

The relationship between housing and health is well recognised.

The immediate and long term health impacts of residents living in substandard housing was of concern to the Canterbury community. Even prior to the earthquakes, much housing in Canterbury was of a poor quality, with many homes having inadequate insulation or heating.

Direct Effects

- Excess winter mortality
- Cardiovascular disease
- Respiratory disease, e.g. asthma
- Spread of communicable disease



Indirect Effects

- Strained relationships
- Mental health and emotional wellbeing

PARTNER AGENCIES

14 local and government agencies are involved in Warmer Canterbury;

- Canterbury District Health Board | Earthquake Commission
- Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority | Red Cross
- Environment Canterbury | Christchurch City Council
- Community Energy Action | Ministry of Social Development
- He Oranga Pounamu | Pegasus Health
- Canterbury Temporary Accommodation Service | Age Concern
- Christchurch Resettlement Services | Tenants Protection Association

