

Report on	Keep Warm Packs – Update Report
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Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To advise Members of the outcomes from recent audit on the distribution of Keep Warm Packs within Mid Ulster area
2.0	Background
2.1	The Public Health Agency fund a number of Keep Warm Packs for the Mid Ulster area, which are distributed through the Environmental Health department. At a recent Environment Committee, an audit was requested into how these had been distributed to date.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Keep Warm Packs in Mid Ulster area are funded through both the Northern PHA (Cookstown and Magherafelt areas) and the Southern PHA (Dungannon and South Tyrone area). The supply and distribution of Keep Warm Packs is a small rapid response scheme designed to help address fuel poverty, no additional resources are provided for the administration of the scheme.
3.2	Although the criteria across the two funders were the same, the distribution methods were left to each of the three legacy councils to ensure that they were reaching qualifying individuals and families. In 2017/18 the PHA agreed a regional approach and procured the packs centrally but it was at Council's discretion on the distribution strategy. The packs continued to be issued using the same process as in the legacy Councils. The audit report outlines how this was carried out within each area. There is an element of subjectivity and judgement in ensuring that packs reach those within the identified criteria but as the audit notes there is no evidence on file to suggest that this has not been the case.
3.3	The audit notes that there was evidence on file to promote the scheme across the District via Council minutes, launch of events, newspaper articles and the Council website. The scheme was publicised on the Council website, which was last updated on 02 December 2016 stating, "MUDC in conjunction with the PHA, will be providing local organisations with KWP to distribute to those most in need in the community to help them stay warm this winter.... For more information, contact Environment Health..."
3.4	There was no documented process requested by PHA funders. It was initially discussed at Council meetings in Magherafelt and Cookstown, and the legacy distribution process that was agreed continued through into Mid Ulster District Council. The Southern Trust did not

3.5	<p>initially require any form filling until 2017/18, the distribution process had been agreed under a SLA with the Southern Group.</p> <p>On 14 December 2017, MUDC following concerns raised about the scheme, agreed a distribution strategy of the packs solely via a referral process through the Environmental Health Department. These professional officers should be well placed and work closely with Social Services, GP surgeries, statutory and community organisations to distribute the packs accordingly.</p>
3.6	<p>However, there were 767 packs retained in the Cookstown and Magherafelt offices as at 31 December 2017 and it was reported that very limited stocks were made available in the Dungannon area.</p>
3.7	<p>The recommendations within the report refer to the overall operation of the distribution of the Keep Warm Packs. All recommendations will be acted upon and improvements made as appropriate in line with the regional funding requirements.</p>
3.8	<p>Members played a valuable role in the distribution of these packs previously. In order to maximise the use of these packs it is recommended that there is an allocation of 10 packs made available to each Member for distribution. This will require the criteria to be confirmed via returned documentation to the Environmental Health Department by each Member. If Members do not wish to utilise their quota these can be re allocated through Environmental Health distribution methods.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial: Packs funded by the Public Health Agency. Human: N/A</p>
4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>That Members note the content of the audit report and the recommendations made therein. Members to have ten packs available per member for distribution within their respective constituencies.</p>
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	<p>Appendix 1: Audit report</p>

Appendix 1

Mid Ulster District Council

INVESTIGATION REPORT ON 'KEEP WARM PACKS'

2017/18

February 2018



INTRODUCTION

There are six Health Care Trusts across Northern Ireland with the Southern Trust covering Council areas including Dungannon and the Northern Trust including Magherafelt and Cookstown. The Public Health Agency (PHA) provide a number of health and wellbeing initiatives and the 'Keep Warm Pack' (KWP) scheme was introduced to Councils in 2012 for the distribution of packs to vulnerable people (approx. £7k per Council) to address fuel poverty. The funding is channeled from PHA via the two Trusts for the distribution of the packs, by working in partnership with local Councils, Health and Social Care Trusts, and Community Networks.

The KWP was a rapid response scheme to help those most in need with fuel poverty and it was at Council's discretion on how to distribute the packs based on local needs.

In November 2015 after RPA, PHA Northern Trust awarded £12,500 to MUDC for the three areas (approx. 595 packs) with an additional requirement requesting enhanced monitoring feedback regarding pack distribution. The PHA further advised in 2017/18 that it was important that the packs were distributed to those individuals who are experiencing fuel poverty. Thus, knowledge of the individual or households circumstances or a visit to the household was preferred to ensure packs are going to those most in need and stated that packs should not be distributed at public or group events. The PHA stipulated specific criteria for the KWP distribution:

- (1) Be experiencing Fuel Poverty;
 - (2) NOT have received A 'Keep Warm Pack from a different source
- AND
- (3) Fall into one of the five health categories.

A form was issued by the Northern PHA group in 2012 for each pack recipient requesting a postcode, council name, who distributed the pack

and how the recipient met the criteria. The form was not required by the Southern PHA until 2017/18.

BACKGROUND

On 04 December 2017 at the Environment Committee, an internal investigation was requested by Members on the distribution of the KWP.

SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The scope of the investigation was limited to 2014/15 and 2016/17 and covered the following areas:

- Consistency in relation to the process on distribution of the packs across the three areas;
- Review the monitoring returns to the PHA against the records retained by MUDC;
- Review the policies and procedures in place for managing the KWP;
- Consider the allegations regarding inappropriate distribution of KWP.

INTERNAL AUDIT SUMMARY

The KWP rapid response scheme was introduced in 2012 to address fuel poverty across Northern Ireland which was funded by the PHA and delivered through the Health Trust areas. The scope of the investigation was limited to 2014/15 and 2016/17.

The three legacy Council's and MUDC (owing to its location) connects with two PHA Health Trust areas, who have varied processes in place whilst both striving to address fuel poverty:

- The Northern PHA provided KWP funding to the legacy Cookstown and Magherafelt areas and each Council procured their packs. It was at the Councils discretion on how to distribute the packs and the PHA required monitoring forms for each pack issued.
- The distribution strategy was agreed at Magherafelt Council in October 2011 - the packs would be distributed equally amongst Councillors

who were familiar with their electoral registers and to maintain recipient records which reflected the rationale for the award. There were no records retrieved in the Magherafelt Council in 2014/15 apart from PHA monitoring returns completed by the Director of Environmental Health. Magherafelt Council had outsourced the delivery of the Energy Efficiency programs to Magherafelt Advice Centre but it did not include the distribution of the packs. There were no records found on file to illustrate if each Councillor got packs or whether they were issued on a first come first served basis.

- In Cookstown, the Council launched the scheme and agreed in November 2012 to distribute the packs to a list of partner agencies and to refer any individual requests to the Council officers. In December 2014, the scheme was relaunched and packs were distributed to partner organisations and each Councillor was approved an allocation of up to ten packs for distribution. There were a number of missing forms and the forms were not maintained in an organised manner. It was not possible to reconcile the completed forms to the PHA returns as the PHA forms did not require dates which further weakened the audit trail.
- The Dungannon packs were procured by the PHA Southern Team based on a service level agreement within the Southern Group Councils. The packs were disbursed to the pre-agreed drop off locations e.g. Vineyard Church, St. Vincent de Paul with a small quantity of packs accessible to the Council for distribute accordingly. The Progress Monitoring Returns were completed by the Lead Council. The PHA Southern Team did not require completion of forms until 2017/18.
- In MUDC, the packs continued to be issued using similar processes from the legacy Councils. The scheme was broadly presented to Environment meetings in January 2015 and October 2016 but the distribution and accountability strategy was not clearly discussed at the

meetings. There was no MUDC documented procedure / process in place on how the packs were distributed. The October 2016 Environment Committee stated that referrals can be made to the EEA for fuel poverty schemes. However, Councillors continued to distribute the packs in 2017/18 (178 forms distributed by Councillors up to 31 December 2017). The distribution process was not clearly reviewed as it evolved.

The PHA Northern forms requested post codes as a means of recording the target groups which can lead to subjectivity and it was difficult to determine if the applicant was in receipt of previous funding (also the content of packs varied). Moreover, the Southern Trust did not require any form filling for their pack for the same scheme until 2017/18. The PHA forms did not require dates so it was difficult to determine the period they related to.

There was also evidence that the DUP used their promotional flyers to promote the scheme on a leaflet. The DUP were actively involved in distributing the packs based on statistical reports on file e.g. 178 forms completed in 2017. The Council(s) have no control on what third parties / Councillors input into the packs, how they distribute the packs and also have no control on what recipients do with the packs.

The scheme was a small rapid response scheme to the address fuel poverty with limited resources provided for the administration of the scheme. In terms of materiality, it would be perceived as low risk but with minimal guidance from PHA on the distribution strategy it has weakened the audit trail. There is an element of subjectivity and judgement in ensuring the packs meets the needy which can lead to mis-use of funds but there is no concrete evidence on file to support this.

There was some evidence on file to promote the scheme across District via Council minutes, launch of events, newspaper articles and the Council website.

On 14 December 2017, MUDC following concerns raised about the scheme, agreed a distribution strategy of the packs solely via a referral process through the Environment Health Department. These professional officers should be well placed who work closely with social service, GP surgeries, statutory and community organisations to distribute the packs accordingly. However, there were 767 packs retained in the Cookstown and Magherafelt offices as at 31 December 2017 and it was reported that very limited stocks were made available in the Dungannon area. This should be reviewed urgently to allocate packs to deprived people during this cold season across the District.

One of the most difficult aspect of this scheme is determining an appropriate distribution strategy to ensure that the packs reached the target population. The Council should consult with the PHA to provide further guidance on the accountability and distribution of the packs.

DETAILS

The procurement and distribution of the packs varied across the three legacy Council's since commencement in 2012:

1. Cookstown legacy Council

The PHA awarded funding to Cookstown Council in 2012 to procure and distribute the packs according to their predetermined criteria. The contents of the packs varied across the districts (which resulted in price variation per pack). Cookstown Council's launched the scheme on 15 November 2012 and 11 November 2014, was advertised in the local papers and it was reflected in the minutes of Council meetings:

- On 27 November 2012 at Policy, Resources and Services Committee - covered the KWP scheme and provided a distribution list amongst partner agencies to ensure they were distributed to the target group. The minutes stated that Members may wish to note that a number of packs have been allocated for Council distribution. In the event that any member received a request from an eligible household, the Community Support Team will make the necessary arrangements to provide the appropriate assistance. The funders have requested that Council maintains a distribution record for monitoring purposes.
- On 16 December 2014 at Policy, Resources and Services Committee – acknowledged the Council was in receipt of 'slippage' funding from the PHA for KWP. Each Member would have an allocation of up to ten KWP for distribution to vulnerable households, in accordance with the agreed criteria. The distribution of the KWP was formally launched at an event in the Council Offices on Thursday 11th November 2014.

The PHA provided funding for an Energy Efficiency Advisor (EEA) and Cookstown employed an EEA to deliver the PHA programs which included the KWP scheme.

2. Magherafelt legacy Council

The PHA awarded funding to Magherafelt Council in 2012 to procure and distribute the packs. Magherafelt legacy Council outsourced the delivery of all the Energy Efficiency programs to Magherafelt Advice Centre but it did not include the distribution of the KWP (no officer was employed by the Council to deliver the programs or packs). The distribution strategy was discussed at a Council meeting. The packs were procured by Magherafelt Council and the quotations were discussed at a Council meeting. The Director of Environmental Health submitted Progress Monitoring returns to the PHA but there were no individual records / forms retrieved in the Magherafelt offices in 2014/15.

There is evidence to show that the scheme was discussed at Magherafelt Council meetings:

- On 25 October 2011 Council meeting - agreed to purchase KWP and the distribution strategy was discussed at the General Purpose, Finance & Policy Committee. It was agreed to purchase 1,000 packs which equated to 60 packs per Councillor who were very familiar with their electoral registers and that they were thus probably in the best position to know which of the ratepayers would be in the most need with the proviso that a record be kept of who the recipients together with the reason for selecting each of them.
- On 08 November 2011, two quotations were presented to the Council and the successful supplier was selected.
- On 13 November 2012 Council meeting agreed to accept the funding of £7k from PHA towards the KWP scheme.

3. Dungannon legacy Council

The Dungannon packs were procured by the PHA Southern Team based on a service level agreement with the Southern Group. The packs were disbursed to the pre-agreed drop off locations e.g. Vineyard Church, St. Vincent de Paul with a small quantity of packs accessible to the Council for

distribute accordingly and some packs were issued at PCSP events. All partner organisations collected their allocation from the drop off locations. There was no specific Energy Efficiency Advisor employed directly by Dungannon as there was a SLA in place with the Lead Council (ABC) to deliver the programs in conjunction with the Home Accident Prevention Officer which included some aspects of this work. The Progress Monitoring Returns were also completed by the Lead Council. The PHA Southern Team did not require completion of forms until 2017/18.

4. MUDC

Owing to MUDC's geographical location, it still connects with two Heath Trust areas. The PHA support a number of programs including Make a Change, Fuel Stamp Schemes, KWP, Home Safety and Affordable Warmth Safety. These programs were presented at MUDC Council meetings e.g.

- On 14 January 2015 – Environment Committee – Health and Well Being Improvement Strategy for MUDC which referred to the 'distribution of KWP to those living in fuel poverty as identified through PHA criteria' in Appendix 1. It did not specifically state the process for KWP distribution nor reiterate the need to complete forms for monitoring purposes but stated there were varied processes from the PHA Northern and Southern Trusts whilst achieving the same outcomes.
- On 11 October 2016 – Environment Committee – Update to members on PHA funding. The Energy Efficiency Advisor will signpost to other sources of fuel poverty such as keep warm packs. The criterion for fuel poverty support schemes varies. Referrals can be made to the EEA who makes an initial assessment, provide support and determine eligibility. In addition, the EEA organises talks / information stands/ press releases and

events throughout the year to raise awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

The scheme was publicised on the Council website which was last updated on 02 December 2016 stating that MUDC in conjunction with the PHA, will be providing local organisations with KWP to distribute to those most in need in the community to help them stay warm this winter.... For more information, contact Environment Health...

In 2017/18 the PHA agreed a regional approach and procured the packs centrally but it was at Council's discretion on the distribution strategy. The packs continued to be issued using the same process as in the legacy Councils. The PHA Northern Trust packs covered the Dungannon area (email confirming approval on 07 December 2015).

PHA Progress Monitoring Forms

The PHA requested quarterly 'Progress Monitoring Reports' which required financial and qualitative information on all programs funded by the PHA. In 2017/18, the packs were procured centrally by the PHA. The PHA Northern returns on file present the following analysis on KWP during 2014/15 and 2016/17:

Year	KWP Fund £	Actual £	Procure & distribute	Q1-Q4 Issued	Forms	Audit issues
2014/15 MF Ref 24	5,892	7,005	318.	309	No forms found	No forms retrieved
2014/15 CDC Ref 22	4,830	4,833	262.	378 (c/fwd)	105 forms on file	Missing forms

					(5 incomplete forms).	
2016/17 CDC/ MF Ref 05	6,142	6,073	292	255	287 forms (Dungannon 1, Cookstown 186 & Magherafelt 100 forms)	5 - blank 5 - no details who issued the pack 1 - no postcode

*Price varied according to pack content.

Statistical analysis on file:

Councillor 2016/ 17	Party	Area	Packs Issued	Forms returned	Review	Per return Qtr1-4
Trevor Wilson	UUP	Not Noted	9	9 returned	The forms could not be specifically identified to each Councillor	
Frances Burton	DUP	Not Noted	10	Not required by SHT area		
Anne Forde	DUP	Magherafelt	171	171		
K Buchanan	DUP	Not Noted	138	138		
Overall issued to Councillors			328			255

The figures reported in the returns did not fully reconcile with the number of forms retained on file. Internal Audit was informed that unused packs from

one period were transferred to the next period but it was impossible to reconcile the transfers owing to incomplete records and forms were not dated.

As at 31 December 2017 there were 335 mixed packs in Magherafelt and 432 packs in Cookstown. They were mostly retained in secured locations but there were a small number of working packs kept in the offices for planned distribution.

OTHER ISSUES

A member of the public phoned MUDC on 30 January 2017 stating that packs were delivered on behalf of either Wilbert or Keith Buchanan to the Sandholes Road and that the distributor referred to other names of people getting the packs in the area. The caller felt that the packs were not targeted at the most vulnerable groups as in her opinion the Sandholes area would not be regarded as experiencing fuel poverty. She also wanted to know how she was picked and who paid for the packs. (In 2017/18, M Buchanan issued 4 packs on the Sandholes Road).

Another phone call to MUDC on 31 January 2017 stating that recipient was grateful for the pack but was not happy that there were election leaflets in the pack. There was insufficient evidence on file to determine if it was the same complainant as on 30 January 2017.

PCSP held an 'Information and Awareness Event' at Newmills in November 2017 where a number of Council Officers attended the event. Cllr. Reid raised concerns regarding the DUP's use of their promotional flyers to advise that the packs were available from their office.

	BT80 9BY	6	Hillside Cookstown by K Buchanan MLA
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A breakdown of forms completed by Councillors between 01 March 2017 and 31 December 2017:

Distributor (Mar-Dec17)	No of Packs
Cllr W. Buchanan	19
Cllr A. Forde	63
K. Buchanan MLA	96
Total	178

Following a review of the forms retained on file, the top recurring postcodes were as follows:

Year	Postcode	No	Details
14/15 (total forms 105)	BT80 8NL	10	Limekin Lane Cookstown, Womens Shelter by Womens Aid
	BT80 8DN	6	Burn Road Cookstown by Royal British Legion
	BT80 8DU	4	Burnbrae Crescent Cookstown by Cookstown District Disability Forum
16/17 (total forms 287)	BT80 8NL	10	Limekin Lane, Womens Refuge Cookstown by Womens Aid
	BT80 8DU	6	Burnbrae Crescent by Cookstown District Disability Forum
	BT80 8NU	6	Molesworth Road, Shelter by Womens Aid
	BT80 9NG	6	Craigmount, Cookstown by Orritor Cult. Dev. Group

Following a review of forms returned by Councillors only in 2017/18 (in total 178 forms up to 31 December 2017), the top recurring postcodes were as follows:

Mar17-Dec 17	Postcode	No	Details
17/18 (out of 178 forms)	BT80 9BB	10	Tullyard Rd Cookstown by K Buchanan MLA
	BT46 5QW	8	Killygullib Rd, Maghera by Church St Community Group
	BT46 5QQ	7	Swatragh Magherafelt by Cllr A Forde

AUDIT WEAKNESSES

- PHA process (Northern Trust):
 - One of the criterion set by the PHA is to ensure that the recipient did not get other packs but there is no way of verifying this as the PHA forms did not require contact details apart from a postcode. Moreover, the packs changed content from period to period and across the District.
 - Another criterion set was to determine if the recipient was experiencing fuel poverty but upon review of a selection of forms, there was no evidence on file to validate this on any of the forms completed.
- PHA process (Southern Trust):
 - The PHA Southern Trust fund did not request forms until 2017/18 even though it was the same initiative across NI.
- PHA Forms:
 - Missing forms – there were no forms that could be retrieved from the Magherafelt office in 2014/15 and there were 273 unaccounted forms in Cookstown in 2014/15.

- A small number of returned forms were incomplete – missing information e.g. postcodes, who distributed the packs.
 - All forms were not dated so it was difficult to determine what period they related to (dates were not requested on the PHA form)
 - The forms were not maintained in an organised manner so it was difficult to reconcile records to the PHA returns.
 - Most forms do not state if experiencing fuel poverty and if other funding provided.
- Process
 - There was no documented process requested by PHA funders. It was initially discussed at Council meetings in Magherafelt and Cookstown, and the distribution process was agreed but it was not clearly reviewed as it evolved. The Southern Trust did not initially require any form filling until 2017/18 and the distribution process was agreed under a SLA with the Southern Group.
 - The distribution process was not formally documented by MUDC for ease of accountability and future referencing. It was discussed generally at meetings but the accountability and distribution process was not clearly agreed as it evolved.
- MUDC Records / Returns
 - Returns were completed but the figures in the returns could not be reconciled to the forms retained on file.
 - No reconciliation kept on file between receipt, issuing and transferring of packs from one period to another – no formal stock system in place for the packs.
 - There was no central record found on file as to who got what packs and a large amount of missing forms which weakened the audit trail.

MANAGEMENT ACTION PLAN

Audit Recommendation	Status (Accept / Not Accept)	Management Comments	Responsible office:	Implement by:
1. Council should consult with the PHA to provide further guidance on the accountability and distribution of the packs.	Accept	EH Service will liaise with PHA on revised guidance and distribution arrangements .	HOS / PEHO	31/3/18
2. Present the agreed distribution strategy to Council after consultation with the SMT.	Accept	Proposed arrangements discussed at SMT	Director	31/3/18
3. Agree the distribution strategy of the packs remaining in storage urgently to allocate packs to the deprived people during this cold season.	Accept	Revised arrangements discussed at March Environment Committee .	Director / HOS	31/3/18
4. Reiterate the importance of achieving the objectives of the scheme to the Council and to ensure adherence to the Code of Conduct for Councillors whilst performing Council duties to the Public. Any activities channelled through the Council should not be used or perceived to be used for any political gain.	Accept	Revised arrangements discussed at March Environment Committee .	Director / HOS	31/3/18
5. Document the agreed accountability and distribution strategy.	Accept	Revised arrangements will be fully documented following meeting of Environment Committee .	HOS / PEHO	31/3/18
6. Ensure there is a transparent audit trail retained on file between packs received, issued and reported to the PHA.	Accept	Transparent and documented audit trail put in place for all packs distributed .	HOS / PEHO	1/12/17
7. All records should be retained in an organised manner for ease of future	Accept		HOS / PEHO	1/12/17

retrieval and supports the achievement of the objectives of the scheme.		Comprehensive and documented record management system put in place for all transactions.		
8. Establish a stock control system for the packs.	Accept	As for Item 7.	HOS / PEHO	1/12/17