

Surviving Winter



Surviving Winter Review
2013/14

Introduction

The first Surviving Winter appeal was launched in 2010 after a Somerset Community Foundation donor offered to give the equivalent of his Winter Fuel Payment to help local pensioners struggling with the cost of staying warm and healthy. This simple idea has since gone on to become a national award winning programme that has raised over £300,000 in Somerset and over £4million across the UK.

During the 2013/14 winter almost £60,000 was raised in donations and a further £15,000 was delivered through our partners' match funding, helping 450 of Somerset's most vulnerable older people. Every penny donated made a difference.

Why we need your support

There are, on average, almost 300 Excess Winter Deaths each year in Somerset. The majority of people who suffer a premature winter-related death are over 65 year old. Hundreds more experience hardship and suffering due to the cold weather, the cost of heating and poor housing.

As a rural county, Somerset has a higher number of 'hard to heat' homes dependent on more expensive fuels (oil, LPG, solid fuel). We also have an above average population of older people within our communities.

Average energy bills rose 37% between 2010 and 2013¹ and it is now estimated there are over 21,500 households in fuel poverty in Somerset². It has also been estimated that it costs the NHS a staggering £1.36 billion³ each year to deal with the impact of cold homes across the UK.

Cold weather can affect people of all ages but it has a particularly severe impact on illnesses associated with growing older. People who are struggling to heat their homes are also more likely suffer from anxiety or depression and frequently become more withdrawn.

The financial hardship can reduce some to living in one room, going to bed during the day, or missing meals at a time when they need to eat well.

"A Surviving Winter grant was given to a lady aged 86yrs. Her home is extremely cold and is situated close to a stream and is damp and dark. Because of this, she has to shut off the front of her home as it is too cold to live in and lives in the kitchen where she has a solid fuel Aga.

The money she obtained from the Community Foundation allowed her to purchase more oil and be warm that winter."

"A surviving winter grant was obtained for a husband and wife. The husband was suffering from kidney cancer and it was imperative that the home was kept very warm for him. The cost of the fuel bills combined with his terminal condition was adding considerable strain on this elderly couple.

Upon delivering the grant money to them they both became very tearful, such was the effect this sum of money meant to them."

¹ Citizen Advice, November 2013

² <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/fuel-poverty.html>

³ Marmot Review, 2011

Making a Difference

Last year donations to the Surviving Winter appeal helped 450 pensioner households offset the financial burden of winter. The grants, while modest, make a genuine difference to hundreds of people who are able to stay warmer, eat better, and remain more active and healthier.

Donations are channelled through a highly effective partnership of local organisations reaching the most vulnerable older people in every corner of Somerset.

They also add considerable value to donations by providing specialist advice on energy efficiency, benefits, home improvements and health.

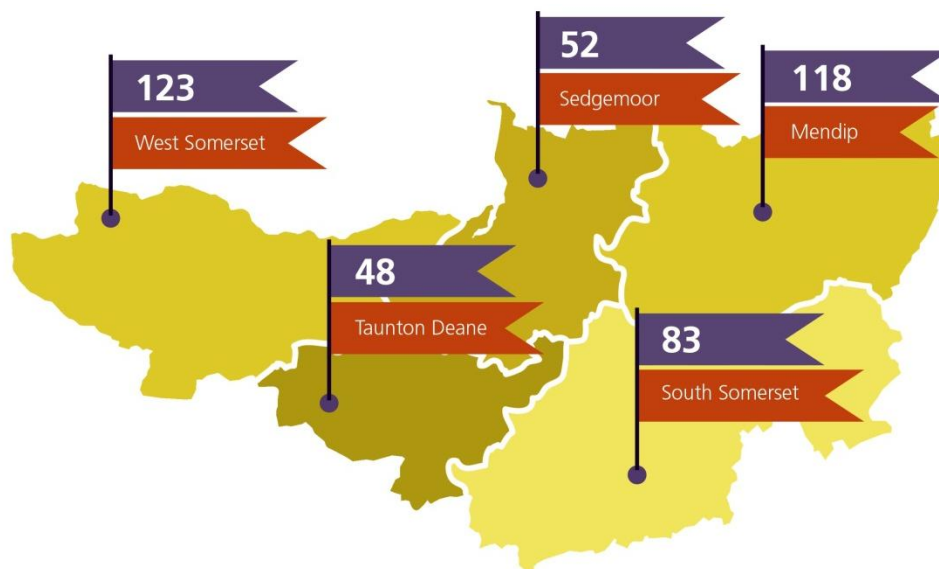
Our partners in 2014 were:

- Age UK Somerset
- Community Council for Somerset
- Forum 21
- Knightstone Housing
- Mendip Citizen Advice Bureau
- Mendip Community Credit Union
- Rotary Club Frome Selwood
- Taunton Citizen Advice Bureau
- Wincanton Live at Home
- Yarlington Housing Group

We identified a lady (but) when we initially approached her, she wouldn't consider accepting a grant because she was sure that other people were worse off than her.

She did say that what she would really like were some cosy fleecy pyjamas so we gave her a grant to buy two pairs (which she got in the sale to ensure that there was as much money to go to other people as possible)!

The map below shows the number of grants awarded in each district in 2013/14⁴.



Since 2010 over 1,700 Surviving Winter grants have been awarded in Somerset alone, and our model has been replicated by Community Foundation throughout the UK raising over £4m during the past four years.

⁴ The relatively low uptake in Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane is being addressed by new partnerships with local organisations in 2014/15.

Thank You

The Surviving Winter appeal would not be possible without the generous support and compassion of hundreds of donors across Somerset. Here is some feedback directly from people who were helped by the programme last winter which we hope illustrates how your donations have been put to good use.

"Thank you very much for your kindness in sending a cheque - greatly appreciated at my age, especially since I have osteoarthritis and the weather has been affecting my joints."

"Since I live on a low income and always find it difficult around winter time this grant will make all the difference to me. I intend on spending the £100 by putting £50 on the gas and £50 on the electricity. It was a huge help."



"I can't thank you enough. I have rheumatoid arthritis and feel the cold and have the worry of using my gas central heating. This money is a big help to relieve my worry. Thank you."

"This grant will prove very useful. We use some of it to insulate some of the windows as it can be draughty."

"With the money I will buy a room heater. The grant will make a lot of difference."

"(The grant) enables me to keep the central heating on which helps as I am frail and also suffer with Reynauds, so have to keep gloves on all the time"

"It will help with the heating bill as heating has been on all day as I have been ill. Thank you."

"I suffer from poor circulation so a rug to put around my legs will keep me warm."

For more information about the Surviving Winter programme please contact Somerset Community Foundation on 01749 344949, email info@somersetcf.org.uk or visit www.somersetcf.org.uk