

Warm Front Close Out Report



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

Introduction



This report marks the final year of the Warm Front scheme after more than a decade of providing heating and insulation measures to low income and vulnerable customers across England.

As we come to the end of Warm Front, it is worth taking some time to pause and reflect on the huge amount of work the scheme has carried out and the positive impact it has had. Since 2000 the scheme has helped around 2.3 million households vulnerable to fuel poverty across England.

This report focuses on the final phase of the scheme from 2005 when Carillion Energy Services took on the role of sole Scheme Manager across England. Since 2005, the scheme has assisted in excess of 1 million households, installed over 500,000 boilers and heating systems, and insulated more than 200,000 lofts and 100,000 cavity walls. A full breakdown of the measures that the scheme has installed is shown alongside this report.

Whilst Carillion Energy Services are proud of the achievements of the scheme, we recognise that none of our work would have been possible without the efforts and achievements of our installer base and networks of partners, community and voluntary groups all across the country.

Our installer base has combined providing installations in a safe and timely manner with high levels of customer satisfaction. Our robust but fair relationship has allowed delivery of ever increasing levels of performance and I offer my thanks to every installer who has worked on Warm Front for their efforts.

We also owe a debt of thanks to the many and varied charities, consumer organisations, voluntary bodies and community groups across the whole of England who have worked with Warm Front to allow us to deliver the scheme to some of the most hard to reach. Together with our networking teams we established valuable partnerships for the delivery of the scheme to some of those most in need and, again, we extend our sincere thanks to them.

In considering the lasting impact of Warm Front, it is easy to focus on the hugely impressive figures for measures installed and households assisted but behind these numbers are hundreds of thousands of stories of vulnerable people whose lives have been changed for the better by the scheme. We should be proud of its achievements.

Asa Parker

Commercial Director Carillion Energy Services

“Hundreds of thousands of stories of vulnerable people whose lives have been changed for the better by the scheme.”

Headline impacts

In the final year of the scheme, Warm Front delivered energy efficiency improvements across a wide range of households with some of the key impacts being:

- 32,059 households received assistance.
- 26,815 households received heating measures.
- 3,785 households received insulation measures.
- There was an average Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) improvement of 39 points from 24 to 63.

The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the methodology used by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings. Its purpose is to provide accurate and reliable assessments of dwelling energy performances that are needed to underpin energy and environmental policy initiatives.

SAP works by assessing how much energy a dwelling will consume and how much carbon dioxide (CO₂) will be emitted in delivering a defined level of comfort and service provision, based on standardised occupancy conditions. This enables a like-for-like comparison of dwelling performance.

Please note: the Warm Front Scheme adheres to SAP 2005 version 9.83



An explanation of the Warm Front scheme

The Warm Front scheme, launched in 2000, was recognised as a key programme in the Government's approach to tackling fuel poverty in England.

The scheme was developed from the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme which began in 1991. The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, published in November 2001, identified the scheme as a key programme in tackling fuel poverty because it addressed poor energy efficiency, and therefore reduced household energy bills.

From April 2009, the scheme provided a grant of up to £3,500, or £6,000 if an oil central heating system was required, to enable the provision of heating and insulation measures in vulnerable private sector households. This was an increase from £2700 and £4000 respectively before April 2009 as part of a number of changes to the scheme which are explored in more depth later in this report. Vulnerable households are defined as those with low incomes containing older people, families with children, or those who are disabled or have a long-term illness.

Administration of the scheme

When the scheme was launched in 2000 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs divided England into four geographical areas and engaged two contractors, TXU Powergen and Eaga Partnership Ltd., to act as Scheme Managers.

When the Department re-awarded the contract in June 2005, Eaga Partnership Ltd. was awarded the contract for all four areas. Eaga was acquired by Carillion in 2011 and rebranded as Carillion Energy Services.

The Scheme Manager employed a framework of subcontractors to deliver the scheme. The customer application process was such that potential customers contacted the Scheme Manager, or were referred by a third party, to determine whether they were eligible. In order to highlight the availability of the scheme, Carillion Energy Services employed a team of locally based networkers that marketed and publicised the scheme across their geographic area.

Changes to the scheme

Since 2005 the scheme has undergone a number of changes to both the eligibility criteria and operational delivery.

The scheme underwent two significant periods of change in 2009 and 2011.

2009 changes

In 2009 a National Audit Office report and the Public Accounts Committee offered a number of recommendations on the Warm Front scheme. Following publication of these reports, changes were made to the scheme with the aim of improving the quality of service and driving further value for money. These included an increase in the maximum grant available; a new survey process; increased competition between installers; improvements to the inspection process; a re-tendering exercise for installers who wished to work on the scheme and tighter quality controls to monitor installer performance.

2011 changes

In the Spending Review 2010 Government committed to fund a smaller, targeted Warm Front scheme for a further two years. The scheme and associated activities had a budget of £110million in 2010/11 and £100million in 2011/12.

To ensure that the available help was best targeted at those most vulnerable to fuel poverty, the Government revised the scope of the Warm Front scheme.

The scheme was more tightly targeted at households on certain income related benefits and living in properties that were the most thermally inefficient.

In addition to the income-related benefits, the property in which a customer lived had to have a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating of 55 or below. This was assessed and confirmed by the technical survey in the home.

A number of other changes were made to the scheme to ensure that the available funding was targeted in the most appropriate way:

- The scheme no longer provided benefit entitlement checks. This decision was taken to focus on measures

that could deliver immediate heat and warmth into customers' homes, as well as potentially lowering their energy bills.

- The scheme no longer provided Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs as a measure, again to allow scheme funds to be targeted at measures that had the greatest positive impact for customers.
- The scheme was amended to provide aftercare for one year and one annual service visit, instead of two years aftercare. Customers continued to have access to 12 months of 24/7 aftercare and support, as well as receiving a free annual service to prolong the life of the system. Gas heating systems had a 2-year warranty.
- The scheme moved to inspecting 10% of gas installations and 5% of all other heating installations and insulation measures.

The scheme began accepting applications against the new eligibility criteria on 14 April 2011, having temporarily stopped accepting new applications in December 2010.

2012 changes

On 12 September 2012 the eligibility criteria for Warm Front changed allowing more people access to the help available from the scheme.

These revisions aligned the income-based qualifying benefits with those used for the Affordable Warmth group of the Energy Company Obligation. In addition to the qualifying benefits, assistance continued to be targeted at households living in properties that were poorly insulated or did not have a working heating system. The qualifying SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) threshold for the property was increased from 55 to 63.

Summary

The changes that are detailed above helped to deliver an improved customer experience and made sure that Warm Front funds were targeted to the most appropriate customers.

The next chapter sets out some of the positive experiences that our customers had of the scheme.



Customer satisfaction

Learning from customer feedback, both positive and less than positive, formed a central part of our commitment to deliver improved service. As the case studies below demonstrate, the impact the scheme could have was remarkable:

Mrs G, London

Mrs G from London applied to Warm Front for the first time in 2006. The local council had recommended the scheme, she explained 'I'm very proud of my home, but it can get very cold especially in the winter and when I heard about Warm Front I thought there is no harm in seeing if I could get help'. At survey, Mrs G was recommended loft insulation and this was installed 6 weeks later. Mrs G explained, 'I really noticed the difference, the house was much warmer - especially the following winter'.

Mrs G kept Warm Front's details to hand, and reapplied to the Scheme when she started having problems with her boiler, 'it stopped working in the summer, it wasn't too much of a problem as I was going to my daughters house, but I knew when the winter came it would be unbearable. I remembered Warm Front and rang to see if they could help'. In time for winter, Warm Front provided a new condensing boiler, 'the men that came to install the boiler were no trouble, caused no fuss, they were excellent and I would recommend them to anyone'.

Mrs M

Mrs M applied to Warm Front as her heating was no longer working. Following a survey, Mrs M received a new replacement boiler, insulated hot water tank, programmer and thermostatic radiator controls. These measures lifted her home from a SAP rating of 9 to 57, the equivalent of moving from an EPC rating of G to D. Mrs M was delighted with the work carried out and explained;

"I am writing to say a very big thank you for the wonderful work carried out by your man, Scott, who came to my home in March, to install a new boiler and cistern. I was expecting a least two men to do the amount of work involved, but was amazed how hard, fast and efficiently Scott worked. He was very thoughtful in trying not to make a mess, and kept me informed of how the work was progressing and what was involved. The electrician, John arrived on the second day, so I was very happy when the work was completed that day. Please do convey my sincere thanks to the two men, who did such a wonderful job."

Mr and Mrs E, Norfolk

Mr and Mrs E from Norfolk had a boiler replacement under Warm Front; this included installing a new, more energy efficient boiler, upgrading pipe-work, powerflush and electrical work to ensure compliance with building regulations. The Warm Front measures have lifted the SAP rating of the property from 15 to 65 and made a real difference to their home, as Mr E explained;

"I would like to take this opportunity to let you know how very pleased and grateful we are with our new boiler you arranged to have fitted in our bungalow. It is the first time in 17 years that we have had our home completely heated and with no problems. With the new system we have hot water all day long and no problems whatsoever."

Mr B, St Helens

Mr B lives alone in a semi-detached property in St Helens. He applied to Warm Front having heard about the scheme through his local community centre. He is 77 years old, receives Pension Credit and has a disability.

Before applying to Warm Front, Mr B had heated his property through on-peak electric heaters, which were sometimes supplemented by an old gas fire in his living room. Without any cavity wall insulation and having seen two sharp rises in his energy bills in six months, Warm Front's intervention came just at the right time.

Mr B had a full gas central heating system installed, with an efficient condensing combi boiler. He also had cavity wall insulation, and praised the timeliness and consideration of the installers who carried out the work. Because of their proficiency, Mr B had all measures completed in January, less than two months after he first applied. Modelled data indicates that Mr B's property went from a SAP rating of less than 10 to a SAP rating of 72, and that his likely fuel costs could have more than halved - from some £1,400 per year to £638 per year. Mr B wrote to thank Warm Front shortly after the work had been completed, and said: "Having this work carried out has changed my life - I worry much less about what it's costing me to have the heating on, and it's a weight off my mind."



The scheme in numbers

A suite of data on the scheme delivery and profile can be found on the Warm Front pages of the GOV.UK website.