

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

WINTER WELLBEING

Customer Survey Findings from Central Heating Fund 2017

Date 01/08/19

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Introduction:

In 2017, The Winter Wellbeing Partnership (WWP) worked with 65 customers to install Central Heating Systems (CHS) into their homes, with the aim of improving their health and lifestyle during Cornwall's winter. This was part of a 300 home programme.

The Winter Wellbeing Partnership understands the importance of tackling fuel poverty; it affects the lives of many in Cornwall, with 13.2% of Cornwall's (32,883 households) and 12.5% of the Isles of Scilly's (101) being in Fuel Poverty (*Director of Public Health Annual Report 2017*) and BEIS (*Fuel Poverty Statistics*).

Fuel poverty is a reflection of societal inequality as it acts to worsen the lives of those most vulnerable: the poorest, oldest, youngest and those who have existing health issues. Poor energy efficiency in properties and the high cost of fuel render those on low incomes to heat their homes insufficiently; leading to poor health and wellbeing, financial difficulties and unemployment. As the Cold Homes Toolkit (2018) suggests, those who are in fuel poverty are less likely to progress to or stay in work, resulting in financial adversity. As a society in general, fuel poverty undermines the active economy putting pressure on the healthcare and welfare system.

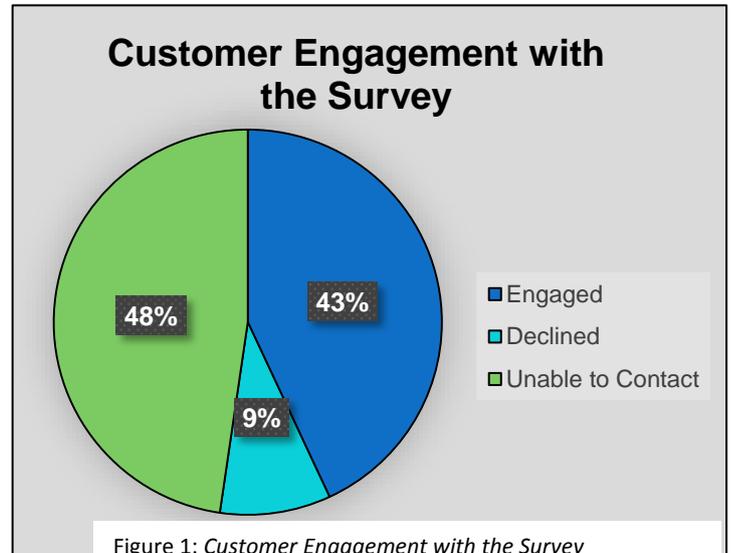
As the Marmot Review (2011) states, fuel poverty 'is avoidable and it contributes to social and health inequalities'. Therefore, taking preventative measures is something that is beneficial for individuals, families and society as a whole. This report looks to analyse the effects of the Winter Wellbeing's First Time Central Heating Project, hoping to see a sustainable and holistic impact on the health and wellbeing of its customers.

1. Customer Engagement with the Survey:

The following information shows the data collected from the 8 questions asked in the Survey. The questions were created in order to evidence whether central heating enabled customers to see significant improvements in their health, finance, and employment. The questionnaire was predominantly undertaken through phone calls, with some responding via email.

In 2017, **65** households had first time central heating installed into their properties.

- **28** Customers responded
- **6** Customers declined to respond
- **31** Customers were unable to be contacted

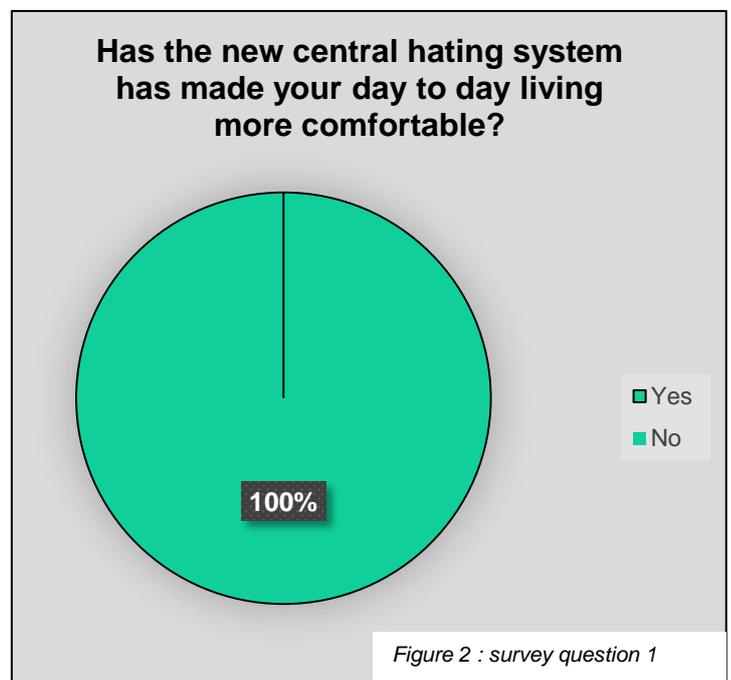


2. Customer Responses:

Referring to Figure 1, the findings shown in this report will be highlighting the views of the **28** respondents:

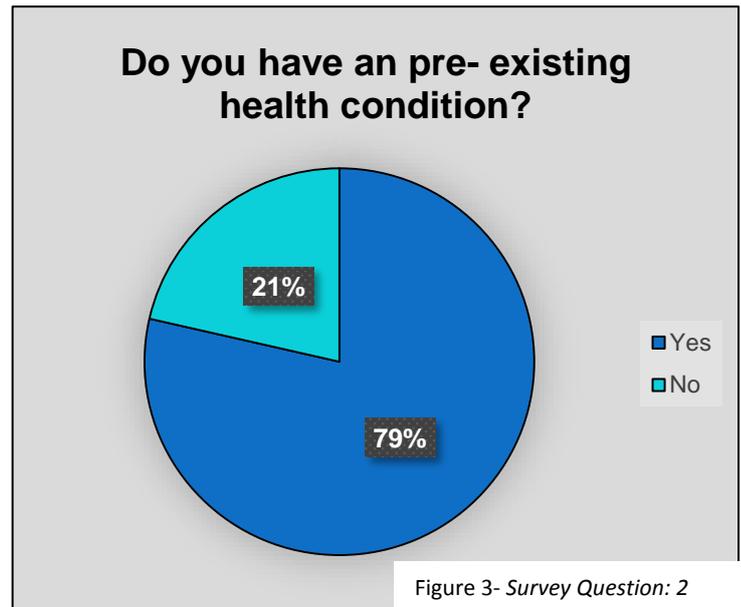
Question 1: Do you think the new Central Heating System has made your day to day living more comfortable?

- **100%** of respondents agreed that the new central heating system has made their day to day living more comfortable
- This data is significant as it evidences that the CHF Project was overall successful in improving the wellbeing and happiness of its customers



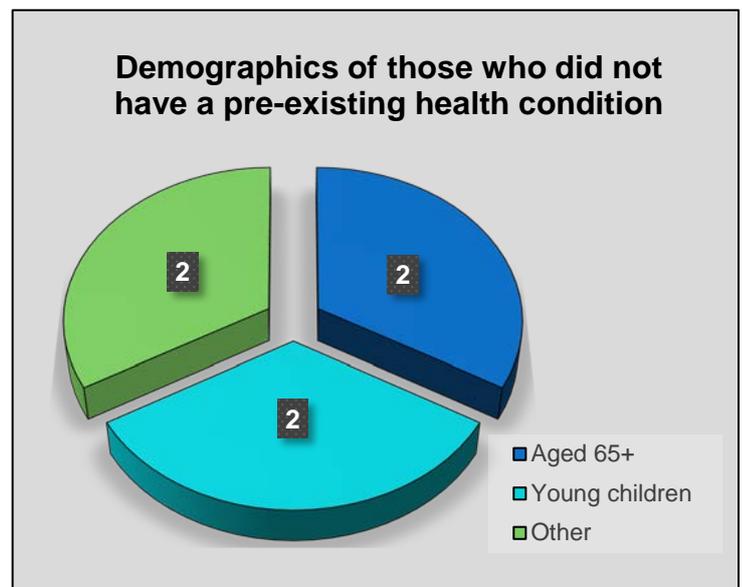
Question 2: Do you have a pre-existing health condition?

- **79%** of respondents stated they had a pre-existing health condition
- **6** out of the **28** respondents on this question answered that they did not have a pre-existing health condition



When analysing the data in Figure 3 it is shown that 2 out of the 6 respondents who said they did not have a pre-existing health condition were over the age of 65. As the Cold Homes guide (2018) suggests, those over the age of 65 are vulnerable and more likely to be in fuel poverty. Furthermore, with this evidence, it can be said that the CHF have taken measures to prevent the effects of cold and damp homes to these individuals over the age of 65.

Two customers who responded to say they had no existing health conditions had children. As referenced in the Cold Homes Toolkit (2018), the youngest of society are also the most vulnerable to the effects of fuel poverty. This, therefore, is also a preventative measure as, by removing the risk of a cold and damp home, children will more likely benefit their long-term health and wellbeing.

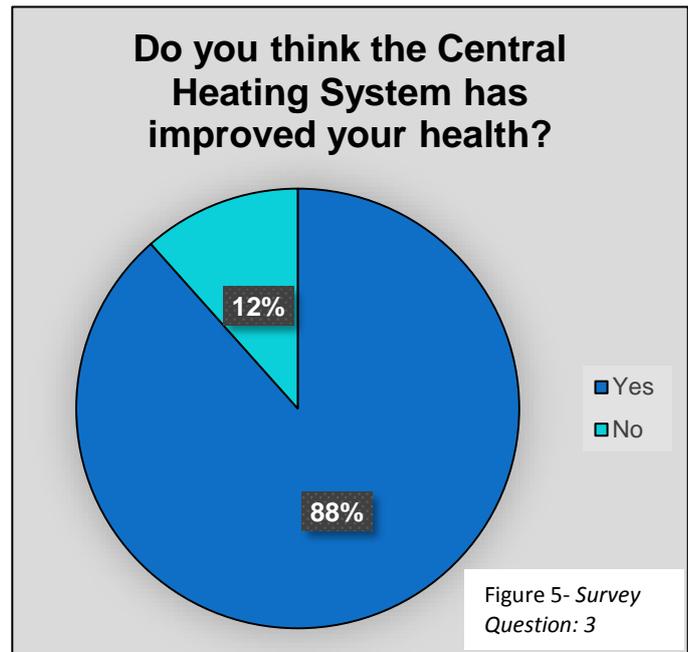


It was also noticed that customers were not always aware that asthma, eczema and flu/colds can be seen as direct consequences of a cold home. If this had been made more apparent, there may have been a larger percentage who registered a pre-existing health condition.

Question 3: Do you think the Central Heating System has improved your health

- **88%** of Customers agreed that the central heating system had improved their or their families' health
- **12%** (3) of Customers disagreed that the central heating system had improved their or their families' health

Children's health and mobility improvements were two significant themes that were apparent in those who agreed that the Central heating system had improved their health.



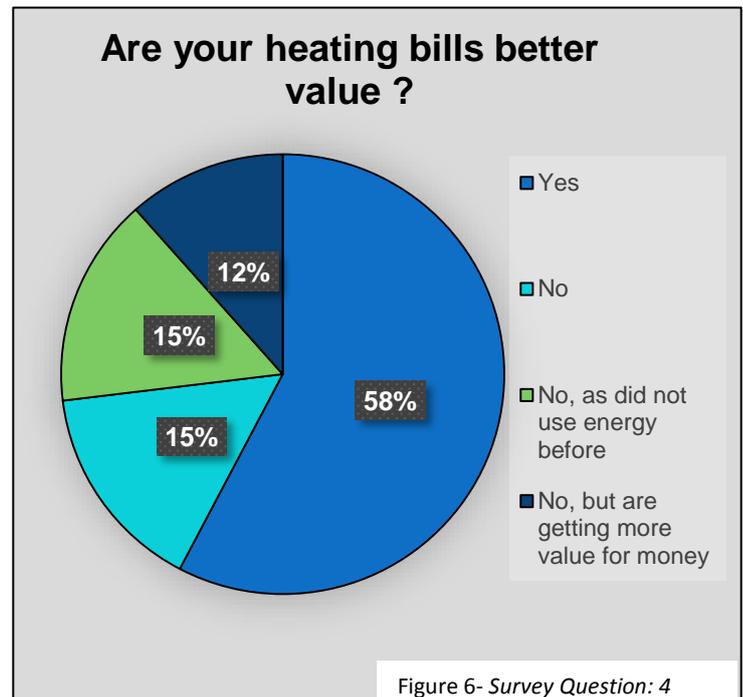
Many respondents stated that asthma and eczema improved and coughs and colds were less frequent. An increase in mobility has also been seen in the feedback from the project; with many respondents saying they felt it easier to move around and to be more active.

Two out of the three respondents who disagreed that the Central heating System did not improve their health did maintain that it was easier to manage their health conditions. For example, one customer stated that the readily available hot water enabled her daughter to have baths which soothed her aching joints.

Question 4: Are your heating bills better value now that you have your new central heating system?

This question sets out to look at the economic value of having central heating installed. As fuel poverty is largely dependent on the cost of energy for a household, this is important data to collect.

- **Over half** of the respondents agreed that their heating bills had become better value since the installation of central heating into their property

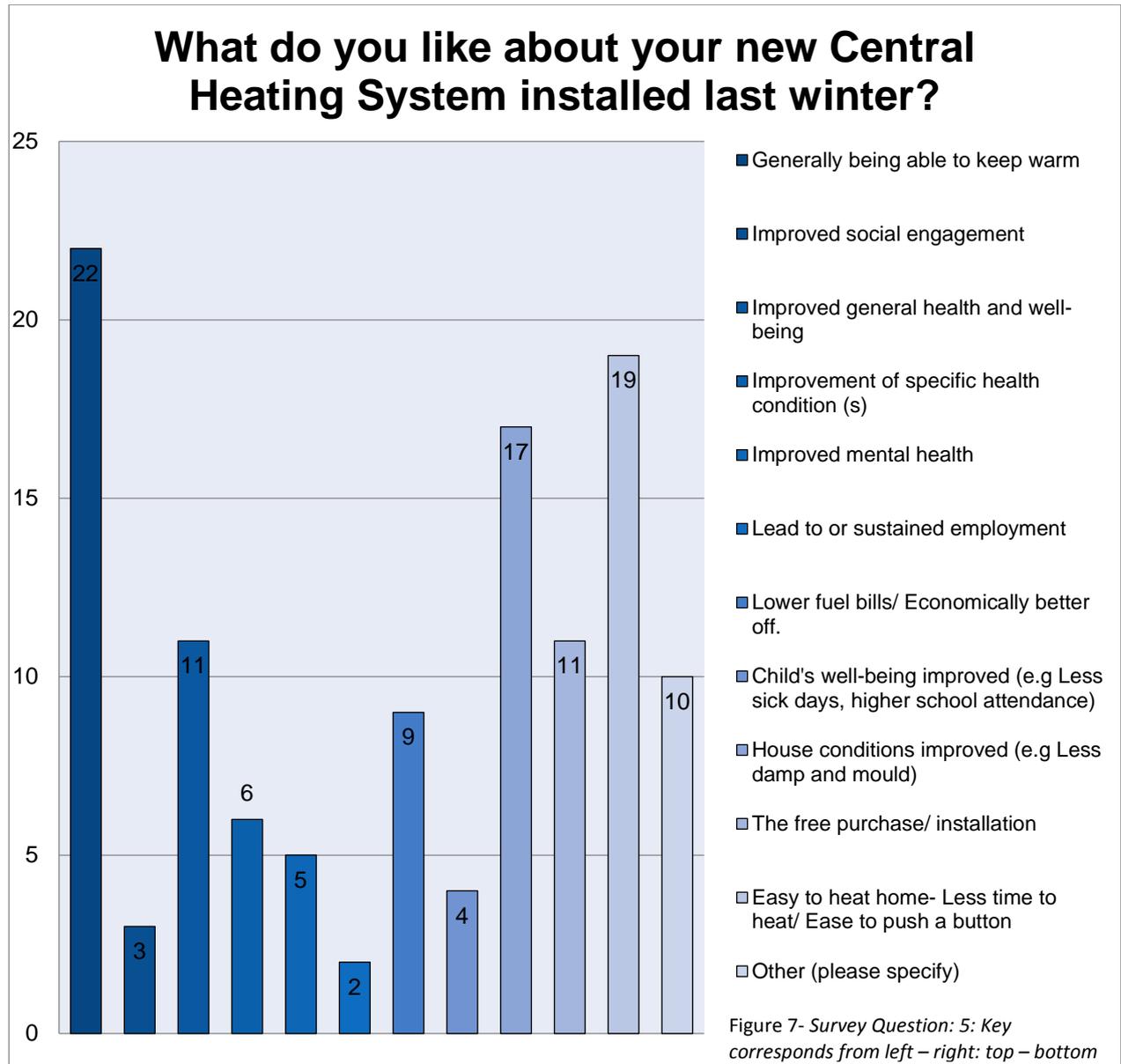


It is important to note that this figure is lower than predicted due to two reasons:

- 1) The Heating bills are more expensive as the customers were not using energy before the installation: **15%** of Winter Wellbeing's customers were not using energy before the project.
- 2) The Heating Bills are more expensive but better value for money (**12%** of customers): For example, the customer can heat the whole house with their central heating, instead of heating a couple of rooms with expensive alternative forms of heating.

Question 5: What do you like about your new central heating System installed last winter?

This question highlights how central heating's positives extend beyond the ability to have a warm home, reinforcing the multiple social, economic and environmental benefits that mutually reinforce one another.



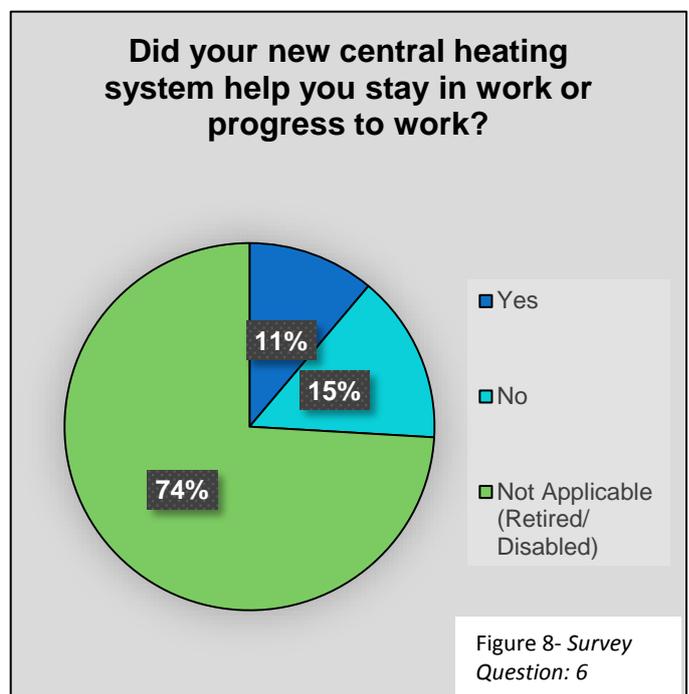
- **19** respondents agreed that the ease of heating the home was a positive. Whilst collecting data, it became apparent that many, who previously relied on solid fuel, found it difficult to heat their home due to it being physically tasking and time consuming. The installation meant that heating the home was easy and reduced the physical burden for its customers

- Improvement of mental health, lower fuel bills and the free purchase/installation were often linked. When speaking to the survey's respondents it was apparent that many customers felt worried about the cost of their fuel bills as they were retired or unemployed. By installing a free central heating system which is better value for money meant that the economic burden that was previously facing the customer was relieved. Furthermore, it can then be concluded that the CH installation has removed pressure facing its customers and has consequently improved mental wellbeing
- **17** Respondents agreed that their house conditions improved. Improving the cold and damp conditions of a cold home enabled the health and mental wellbeing of a customer to improve (reduction of colds/ asthma etc.), as well as alleviating the financial need for repair's (mould removal etc.)

Question 6: Did your new central heating system help you stay in work or progress to work?

This scheme was targeted at those who had long-term health problems or were over the age of 65. Consequently, it was projected that most customers would answer 'not applicable' to this question, as they were either retired or unable to work due to a disability/illness.

Two customers found that the central Heating Installation had worked as a direct factor in helping the individual back to work. These two circumstances were due to the improvement in the customer's health, meaning they were well enough to go back to work and stay in work (taking less sick days etc.).



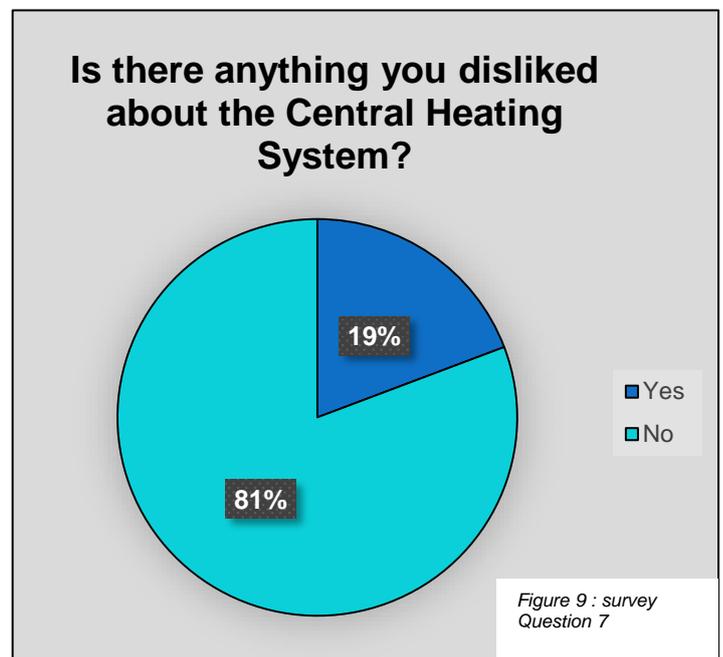
One of the customers who went into employment highlighted the link between fuel poverty and its consequences upon health and employment. The customer had been unable to work due to a pre-existing health condition that was worsened by cold conditions. Since the central heating installation, the customer's health improved dramatically and enabled her to go into employment. Moreover, this customer can be seen as a direct example in highlighting how a warm home improves health and the ability to progress to or sustain employment.

The second respondent who agreed that the central heating system had helped them back into work also stated that a warm home had enabled a higher school attendance for her children. This evidences the link between vulnerable children at risk of ill health in a cold home.

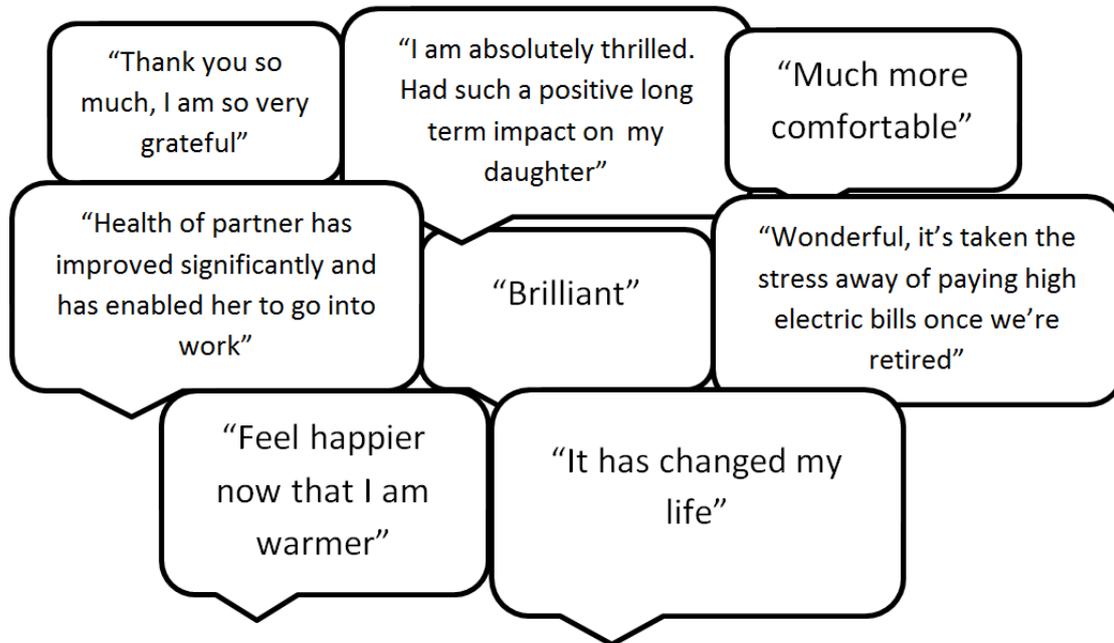
Those who answered 'No' to this question had varying reasons for this. It is important to note that being in fuel poverty is not the sole reason for unemployment as there are multiple and complex issues the customers face which can prevent employment.

Question 7: Is there anything you disliked about your Central Heating System?

- **81%** of respondents did not dislike anything about the central heating system
- **19%** of respondents (5 customers) said there was something they disliked about the central heating System
- **3/5** respondents who answered 'Yes' to this question felt that the installation itself was not satisfactory, with some saying that the level of aftercare was not sufficient



With this, it is important to note that the WWP is not responsible for the physical installation and this was relayed to the customers. The partnership also noted that some customers needed a follow up visit to be able to understand how to use their central heating and how to get the best out of it. Subsequently, these sentiments have been used to improve more recent WWP projects which now have an aftercare and follow-up service.

Question 8: Customer's Comments:Figure 10- Survey Question-8 *Customer's Comments***3. Conclusions and Lessons learnt:**

Fuel Poverty is widespread in Cornwall rendering a need for partnership projects to tackle and prevent its effects. The First Time Central Heating Project aimed to tackle the three core and interweaving effects of fuel poverty in Cornwall: ill health and wellbeing, financial adversity and unemployment.

Analysing the data the survey provided, it can be evidenced that the installation of Central heating positively impacted the health and finances of its customers. The data concludes that most respondents (88%) felt that their overall health had improved and all respondents (100%) believed their day to day living was more comfortable. With this, many respondents found that their heating bills have become more affordable or better value for money (no heating previously/ heating whole home). Evidence also shows that positive impacts such as improved mental health, social engagement and housing conditions were also core outcomes of the scheme.

Two out of the twenty-eight respondents believed that the CH installation helped them go back into work. Although this figure is low, this scheme was aimed at those most vulnerable in society who were retired or not fit for work (elderly, disabled, children etc.) evidencing the large amount of 'Not Applicable' answers (74%). For future heating projects which aim to improve employment, it may be recommended to target households who are in the active population age group in order to gather more relevant data. As highlighted in figure 9 it was noted that some customers were unhappy with the level of aftercare/ follow up visits after the installation

of Central heating. Taking this into consideration, the WWP more recent schemes have provided follow up services, in order to provide more long- term and sustainable support to their customers.

To conclude, the WWP first time central heating project which aimed to help those most vulnerable in Cornwall has seen multiple and reinforcing social, economic and environmental benefits. The scheme has successfully provided sustainable health and financial benefits to its customers whilst supporting Cornwall's future by preventing the burden on its healthcare, welfare and social services.

4. References:

- The Marmot Review Team, (2011). *The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty*
- Cornwall Council; Citizens Advice, (2018). *Cold Homes Toolkit*.
- Director of Public Health (2017) *Annual Report*.
- Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (2019) *Fuel Poverty Statistics*.

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