



AFFORDABLE WARMTH

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

SURVEY 2019

Housing
Executive

January 2020

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Executive summary

Background to the Survey

The Affordable Warmth Scheme was introduced in September 2014, replacing the Warm Homes Scheme. Funded by the Department for Communities and administered by district councils and the Housing Executive, the Scheme aims to improve domestic energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption among eligible households in the owner-occupied and private rented sectors, and thus mitigate the impacts of fuel poverty.

As at March 2018 the scheme has helped 15,486 homes and has provided 29,341 energy efficiency measures. Affordable Warmth continues to provide significant investment to Northern Ireland Housing stock at a value of £64.5 million. In August 2019 the Department for Communities and Department for Finance secured cover for the scheme to operate until March 2024 subject to annual budget.

As part of the quality assurance process for the Affordable Warmth Scheme, the Housing Executive's Grants Department asked the Research Unit to carry out a survey of applicants who received assistance under the Scheme during the financial year 2018/19. The aim of the survey was to measure levels of customer satisfaction with various aspects of the Affordable Warmth Scheme, with a view to identifying areas for improvement, where appropriate.

Questionnaires were issued by post in autumn 2019 to a sample of 500 addresses randomly selected from each of the eleven council areas, proportionate to the total number of completions during 2018/19. A total of 265 completed surveys were received, achieving a high response rate of 59%. This report provides background information on the Affordable Warmth Scheme and how it is administered, and sets out the findings of the survey along with full tabular results. Some of the key findings are summarised below.

Household characteristics

- 58% of respondents were female and 42% were male.
- 44% of respondents described their household as Protestant and 41% as Catholic.
- Almost two-fifths (38%) of respondents stated that they had a long-term illness/health problem/disability which limited their daily activities.
- Nearly two-fifths (39%) of respondents were widowed and almost one-third (30%) were married.
- More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents were aged 60 and over and almost one-fifth (19%) were aged 40-59.
- More than half (57%) of respondents lived in single person households and almost one-third (30%) lived in two adult households.
- The majority (96%) of respondents had no children in their household.
- The majority (93%) of respondents were owner occupiers and three percent were landlords.

Contact with Affordable Warmth

- Almost two-fifths (37%) of respondents self-referred to the Scheme, almost one-fifth (18%) had heard about the Scheme from a local contractor or Energy Advisor and six per cent said they were targeted by a local council surveyor.

- More than four-fifths (85%) of respondents said the Council Surveyor fully explained the Affordable Warmth Scheme to them.
- Most respondents (90%) were satisfied with the length of time from initial contact with staff from the council until contact with staff from the Housing Executive Grants Office.

Aspects of the Affordable Warmth Scheme

- High proportions of respondents said they had been advised of:

- what energy saving measures they were eligible for	81%
- what energy saving measures are available	79%
- how long it might take to carry out the work	69%

Affordable Warmth Scheme measures carried out

- | | |
|---|-----|
| - New Heating System/Boiler Replacement | 83% |
| - Loft Insulation | 48% |
| - Windows Installation | 30% |
| - Windows Repair | 25% |
| - Cavity Wall Insulation | 22% |
| - Solid Wall Measures | 4% |
| - Draught Proofing | 3% |

Approval Pack

- Most (89%) respondents were satisfied with the length of time from their technical assessment to when they received their Approval Pack.
- The majority of respondents (91%) stated that the Approval Pack was easy to understand.
- More than four-fifths (84%) of respondents said the Approval Pack was not difficult to complete.

Building Control Approval

Under the Affordable Warmth Scheme, applicants who receive loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, external wall insulation and/or a new heating system are required to obtain Building Control Approval. A total of 250 respondents received loft insulation and/or a new heating system.

- More than four-fifths (81%) of respondents said it was made clear to them in their Approval Pack that they would require Building Control Approval for the installation of loft insulation and/or a new heating system. A small proportion (5%) of respondents stated it was not made clear to them that they required Building Control Approval and a further 8% did not know.
- More than half (58%) of respondents stated their contractor had made the application for Building Control and almost one-third (29%) of respondents made the application for Building Control themselves.
- More than half (53%) of respondents said the application for Building Control was made before works commenced, 31% did not know and a small proportion of respondents (8%) said the application was not made before works commenced.

Builder/Contractor Satisfaction

- The majority (84%) of respondents said they found it easy to find a builder or contractor to carry out the work.
- One-tenth (11%) of respondents stated that they required help from the Housing Executive in contacting a contractor to carry out the work. Of these 30 respondents, 23 (77%) stated that they would have preferred that the Housing Executive managed the

contractor/installation process on their behalf.

- Respondents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the people who carried out the work in terms of: quality of materials (96%), tidiness (94%) and politeness (95%).
- The majority (94%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the quality of the work they had carried out under the Affordable Warmth Scheme.
- The majority (94%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the length of time it took the contractor/contractors to carry out the work.
- Almost all (99%) respondents stated that the contractor/contractors who carried out the work treated them and their home with courtesy.

Payment Stage

- More than four-fifths (87%) of respondents said the amount of grant available to them was enough to cover the costs for all the measures they were eligible to receive, while 10% said the amount of grant available to them was not enough to cover the costs for all the measures they were eligible to receive.
- The majority (82%) of respondents chose to have the grant paid to the contractor/contractors who carried out the work.
- Of the 46 respondents who chose to have the grant paid to themselves, the majority (41; 89%) were very satisfied/satisfied with the length of time it took the Housing Executive to process the payment after the works were completed.

The Affordable Warmth Scheme Overall

- The majority (97%) of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with the Affordable Warmth Scheme overall. A small number (1%) of respondents were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with the Scheme.
- High proportions of respondents expressed satisfaction with a number of different aspects of the Affordable Warmth Scheme process:

Getting clear information on what they were entitled to under the scheme	92%
Getting access to a builder/contractor	90%
Getting documentation which was easy to understand	88%
Knowing who was dealing with their application	87%
Time taken to get approval to start work	87%
- The majority (93%) of respondents stated that they considered that they had been treated fairly during the Affordable Warmth Scheme process.
- The majority (96%) of respondents were happy with the condition their property was left in after the installation of Affordable Warmth measures had been completed.
- In relation to the installation of Affordable Warmth measures, the majority (88%) stated that standard of their housing had improved.

Affordable Warmth measures, more than one-quarter (29%) stated there had been no change and a small proportion (3%) said these problems had worsened (Appendix Table 45c).

Similar proportions of respondents stated that any problems with paying bills had improved (47%) following completion of the installation of Affordable Warmth measures or there had been no change (48%) (Appendix Table 45d).

8.8 Health Changes Following Completion of installation of Affordable Warmth Measures

Respondents were asked whether their health had improved, worsened or not changed, now that Affordable Warmth Measures had been installed to their home. Almost one-third (31%) of respondents reported that their health had improved, nearly two-thirds (64%) stated their health had not changed and a small proportion (2%) said their health had worsened (Appendix Table 11).

