

Home energy efficiency improvements are having a positive impact on health

Findings published today in the [Fuel Poverty Health Data Linking report](#) show lower health service use among people who had benefited from the Welsh Government Warm Homes Nest scheme.

The study used NHS data to compare the health service use of people who had benefited from Nest home energy improvements and a control group who were eligible for improvements, but were still waiting for these to be completed.

The research found GP events for respiratory illness fell by almost 4% for those who had benefited from Nest improvements, while these rose by almost 10% in the control group over the same period.

A similar pattern was found in relation to asthma events, with a 6.5% decrease in the recipient group and a 12.5% increase in the control group for the same period.

Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths said:

“These findings show not only is our successful Warm Homes Nest scheme helping to reduce energy bills while reducing emissions, but is also having a positive impact on the health and well-being of some of Wales’ most vulnerable households.

“This is why I am pleased we are continuing to invest in home energy efficiency improvements for low income houses and have committed £104million over the next four years to improve up to 25,000 more homes through the Welsh Government Warm Homes Programme.”

Minister for Public Health and Social Services, Rebecca Evans added:

“The Well-being of Future Generations Act requires public bodies to work together to improve well-being, and to create a healthier Wales. This research is encouraging as we work to collaborate with communities to improve health and well-being and think differently about the way we deliver services. Preventing ill-health is much better for the individual than treating it.”

Professor Ronan Lyons, Associate Director of the Administrative Data Research Centre Wales (ADRC-W), based at Swansea University Medical School, said:

“We are delighted that ADRC-W has again been able to assist the

Welsh Government in its analysis of how the Warm Homes Nest scheme has affected Welsh homes and the health of the people living in them.”

The emerging research findings have been used in the development of the new Warm Homes Nest scheme and as a result eligibility for a package of free home energy efficiency measures has been extended to low income homes with members suffering from respiratory and circulatory conditions.

ESRC Chief Executive, Professor Jane Elliott, added:

“The project findings demonstrate the power of linked administrative data for research and policy evaluation and provide robust evidence to inform more cost-effective program delivery and services to improve people’s health and quality of life in Wales. The ESRC-funded Administrative Data Research Network is supporting many other important research projects across the UK that provide evidence on a range of social and policy issues that can only be answered by linking government administrative data.”

A sensible deal in the spirit of good neighbourliness

In his second contribution to the European Parliament debate on Brexit today, Nigel Farage said it must make sense for the EU and UK to come to a sensible accommodation over Brexit

UK passports should allow 'X' as an alternative to 'male' or 'female'

UK passports should allow people to define themselves as “X” as an alternative to male or female, Stonewall have said today.

[Cost of second referendum could instead address Scotland's teacher recruitment crisis](#)

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- Cost of second referendum could instead address Scotland's teacher recruitment crisis

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Nicola Sturgeon must focus on delivering her day job, not threatening a second referendum, the Scottish Conservatives have said today.

Following the First Minister's fresh threat to hold another vote in a speech in California last night, the Scottish Conservatives are highlighting the potential cost of such a plan.

The 2014 referendum cost £17 million to stage.

Meanwhile, a potential legal challenge on the powers to hold a referendum – raised by the First Minister last night – would also run into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Combined, the cost of this unnecessary constitutional plan would be enough to put 750 teachers through their probation – helping to tackle Scotland's crippling recruitment crisis in the classroom.

Scottish Conservative constitution spokesman Adam Tomkins said:

“There is a price to pay for Nicola Sturgeon's constitutional tunnel vision.

“If the First Minister decides to go to the courts, or ram through her own referendum, millions of pounds of taxpayers' money which could be spent on hiring teachers will instead go on her independence vanity project.

“The wider cost is a government in charge of the NHS, education and public services which isn't focused on improving our quality of life, but is instead campaigning for separation.

“It is a lose-lose situation for the Scottish public. Nicola Sturgeon has dug herself into a hole on the constitution.

“It is time to stop digging and get back to the day job she was elected to do.”

Notes to editors:

- It cost £15.8 million to run the first independence referendum. This was £2.1 million more than had originally been estimated by the SNP (Scottish Parliament, *Question S4W-27304*, 4 September 2015, [link](#)).
 - It cost £1.2 million to print and distribute copies of the white paper (Scottish Parliament, *Question S4W-20080*, 11 March 2014, [link](#); Ibid, *Question S4W-20080*, 17 December 2014, [link](#)).
 - Teacher probation salary in 2016/17: £22,416 (*The Educational Institute of Scotland*, [link](#))
 - The cost of a legal challenge is unclear – however, the Scottish Government spent £136,000 purely to intervene in the Article 50 case at the Supreme Court before Christmas.
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[Press release: What goes bump in the night?](#)

With traffic speeds increasing by 10 per cent after dark, night time can be a particularly vulnerable time for Highways England's traffic officers.

In addition to faster traffic, officers have to contend with tired drivers and those struggling to adjust to road conditions after nightfall.

The final episode of ITV's Britain's Busiest Motorway, covers "things that go bump in the night", as traffic officers on the M25 have to help clear debris from a wardrobe and escort horses off the motorway.

One recent night time incident saw traffic officers narrowly avoid serious injury when an out of control car skidded across the motorway, smashing into the back of a van parked in the hard shoulder.

The crash happened around 8pm on Tuesday 8 March near junction 23 of the M25 clockwise.

Traffic officers Mark Cooper and Paul Graham had been speaking with the driver of the van following its break down, and were fortunate the crash did not happen a moment earlier when they were stood at the back of the van.

[YouTube video](#)

The passengers of the van also had a close call as they were sat on the hard shoulder when the crash happened, quickly leaping off and scarpering to safety following the impact.

After the crash, Mark and Paul attended the car to ensure the driver was not hurt, and medics were able to treat the driver who was fortunate to have just suffered minor injuries after the smash .

Caner Okanay, operations manager at Highways England, said:

This incident serves as a timely reminder of the need for drivers to pay extra attention when driving at night. With traffic moving faster and road users feeling tired, accidents are more likely to happen.

Safety is our top priority at Highways England, and we want to minimise the risks faced by both our traffic officers and drivers. This incident was a lucky escape for all involved – for the driver who was unhurt, for the traffic officers who moments before were behind the van, and for the passengers on the hard shoulder.

People do not realise how dangerous the hard shoulder is – these passengers were in danger by casually sitting on the barrier and not paying full attention. The hard shoulder is for emergencies only, and those who do have to use it need to stay behind the barrier, to remain safe and remain vigilant.

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.