

This study was conducted in Rotherham, but the pen portraits can be used in other areas in order to identify old people who are at risk of being cold at home. To identify where people like Enid live at postcode level, social marketing programmes such as Acorn and Mosaic can be used alongside the KWILLT segmentation model.

What are the best ways to identify and help older people living in a cold home?

Across all six pen portraits it is necessary to consider the following interventions:

- Consistent messages addressing and correcting beliefs e.g. the negative health impact of a cold home
- Provide information that promotes action for older people and families, e.g. a helpline and people checking on older neighbours
- Targeted affordable warmth information to older people at key points in their life e.g. retirement, onset of new chronic/ long term condition, bereavement
- Room thermometers provided at routine contact with health, social care and financial inclusion professionals e.g. flu jab, pensions advisors or home visit from a community matron
- Policy development including: Affordable Warmth Strategy linked to the Health and Wellbeing Boards to achieve delivery of the Cold Weather Plan, Public Health Outcomes Framework and other local strategies e.g. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Financial Inclusion.

An Affordable Warmth Strategy Group will achieve the partnership required to deliver this

- Develop pathways of care across organisations and settings (e.g. communities, hospitals, primary care, social care, voluntary sector) with data sharing in order to identify those at risk, assess and refer to responsive interventions. Pathways should include feedback mechanisms to referrers. E.g. a one-stop shop and energy champions.
- Boundary spanning roles that operate at a strategic and frontline level. Examples include affordable warmth officers and volunteer energy champions
- Social prescribing schemes for example where a GP or practice nurse would refer a patient for energy efficiency advice
- Accessible education delivered to all appropriate staff and embedded within existing training e.g. pre registration nurse training, Making Every Contact Count, Local Authority and voluntary sector inductions

What are the best ways to identify and help people like Enid?

In order to address the problems and barriers experienced by vulnerable, socially isolated older people it is necessary to develop ways of identifying those who are at risk and how to help them.

Specific ideas of how to help people like Enid are in the table below.

Solution required	How can we reach	Where
Consistent and accessible Information	Wardens, health and social care staff - Affordable warmth – boundary spanning	In own home
Reassurance that she isn't a bother	Older peoples energy champions/coaching	In own home
Time to understand and build trust in person offering help	TARAs Community organisations e.g. Age UK	Community venues
Easy to use heating technology – visual diagram of controls	Product design	Industry
Raising awareness of family (children and grandchildren)	Schools	Educating in schools about the culture of responsibility
Assessment from wider health/service providers	Pharmacists, opticians,	Pharmacies, opticians
Annual and / or new tenant check focused in information needs and understanding of	Housing officer	Home



Just about managing

ENID



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PEN PORTRAITS

Enid can pay for home heating but values privacy and thrift and lives in a cold home

This pen portrait is about Enid who illustrates people who are vulnerable because they are *“Just about managing”*.

People like Enid do have sufficient money that could be used to pay for home heating, energy efficiency and affordable warmth. They do not necessarily fit the definition of being in fuel poverty but they still live in a cold home. People like Enid may be over 70 years of age, have some social connections, live in social housing, and are in poor health.

Factors that drive their decisions and behaviour regarding keeping warm include:

- Pride
- Privacy
- Thrift
- Not wanting to be a bother.

“I’m not a very wealthy woman; I’ve just got a bit of pension and one thing and another and I can cope.”

ABOUT ENID

Enid is an 86 year old woman. Until recently, Enid’s health has been stable but she is now undergoing investigations for a new health problem (abdominal pain). Her sight is mildly impaired and she has poor manual dexterity and feels a bit stiff from mild arthritis. Enid lives in older people’s accommodation.

The property is fuel efficient but she struggles to use the systems in a fuel efficient way, and doesn’t understand how to use the timers or controls. Technology generally confuses Enid and makes her anxious. As her sight and dexterity problems worsen her ability to control her heating in order to keep her house warm also deteriorates.

Enid is a private person and was so even when her husband was alive. Enid and her husband lived on a low household income and so she is used to being thrifty and values this. Her children keep in touch but they don’t live close by. They visit once every couple of months. Enid doesn’t like to bother them with her troubles, but they have set her up to pay her bills with a direct debit. However, she doesn’t understand how this payment method works and doesn’t trust it or feel in control of how much she is paying on fuel. As a result of this increased vulnerability she turns the heating down because she can’t see how much fuel she is using and money she is spending. Enid spends her winter fuel allowance on her fuel bills.

In the past Enid has had local youths knocking on the door and being disruptive. She feels her personal safety is threatened and is reluctant to open the door to strangers. Her poor eyesight makes her feel more vulnerable so Enid doesn’t like people calling at her door with out warning.

ENID’S HOME

Enid’s house is on a warden controlled council estate of older people’s accommodation. At the back of her garden is a path leading to a small play area with some broken swings and a slide. Enid has a buzzer on the front door and a key code safe for volunteers to access a spare key in case she ever needs help in an emergency. The bungalow is made of brick and was built in the early 1970’s. It was double glazed, cavity filled and its loft was insulated a few years ago as part of the decent homes programme.

There is evidence of Enid’s family all over the house, such as drawings by grandchildren and pictures of family get-togethers. A calendar on the wall in the kitchen lists all the dates and times when Enid will go to the appointments at the hospital, church luncheon clubs and when volunteers will visit. Enid uses a frame with a tea trolley to get around the house and the bathroom has a walk-in shower to help with her mobility problems. The central heating system is in the kitchen at the back of the pantry and the controller is behind a panel on the wall just inside the pantry door. The pantry is quite dark even with the light on which makes it more difficult for Enid to see the controls.

Enid’s living room is small and she has lots of furniture in there sometimes making it difficult to move around with her trolley. Her chair is directly in front of the fire where she can benefit from the most heat. The controls for the electric fire are at the bottom and are quite stiff to turn.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ENID

Enid wakes up about 8am, the heating has already gone off from the morning as she’s still not managed to set up the timers correctly or work the controls.

“I just don’t know why controls have to be hidden behind a control panel that is fiddly and awkward to access, then it’s shaded by everything so it’s difficult to see, the numbers are small, the knobs are small. Bring the knobs onto the front, big clear knobs with big clear symbols.”

Enid spends 10-15 minutes struggling to turn on the boiler because of the difficulty she has using the controls. She also struggles turning on the electric fire and it’s not until she can feel some heat from the fire that she knows it’s on properly as her poor eyesight makes it difficult to see when it’s starting to warm up.

“it’s having the ability to operate the controls, knowing how to operate the controls.”

Sometimes she just leaves it on a low heat all the time because she finds it so hard to turn the heating on and off.

“I’ve got a little gas fire that’s built in, that’s all, I’m warm enough. I leave this [the gas fire] on. I leave this on all night only on a glimmer because sometimes I can’t bend down to switch it on so I leave it on that little thing. Yes, leave the pilot light on and then I just have to flick it”.

Once the gas fire is turned up Enid likes to sit near and see the direct heat. It reminds her of the coal fires she used in her younger years. She finds it difficult to judge how much she is spending on fuel and worries about this. In the past it seemed much easier as fuel was visible (coal) and you knew how much you had, how much it cost and how long it had to last you. Now fuel is invisible. She doesn’t know how much she is using and how much it is costing her.

“Another problem is that people don’t have a feel for how much it is costing them to turn things on do they? You hear the boiler going away and you’ve no idea whether it’s costing you £10.... the natural reaction is going to be to put it on when you need.... using the fire rather than the heating. Because they get an instant response and they know when it’s on, when it’s off”.

(Staff participant in KWILLT)

She makes breakfast and listens to the local radio, which is where she gets most of her information. Enid is quite content with getting her information from the local radio and likes to hear about places that are local and familiar to her. She isn’t so bothered about the national news. She doesn’t often ask for advice but would accept it if it came from a trusted source like a health professional or family member. Yesterday her door bell rang and it was an energy company representative, she didn’t answer the door and felt frightened, this only adds to Enid’s mistrust with people and organisations.

In today’s post she receives information about a “choose and book” appointment for an investigation for her new health problem. She struggles to read the letter because of her impaired sight. In addition she does not understand and trust the new system to make an appointment. She puts the letter to one side.

Enid used to go to church regularly but more recently she has stopped going out on her own. A church volunteer calls twice a week at 9.30am for a cup of tea. Enid can’t manage to shop for herself anymore so a neighbour shops for her and pops in at 10.00am with the shopping. She always has the fire on so the room is warm for when visitors arrive.

At 11.30am community transport comes to pick Enid up and take her to the church luncheon club. She goes there once a week and really looks forward to the company and a nice lunch. Enid doesn’t like people to know that she is struggling and always puts on a brave face at the lunches.

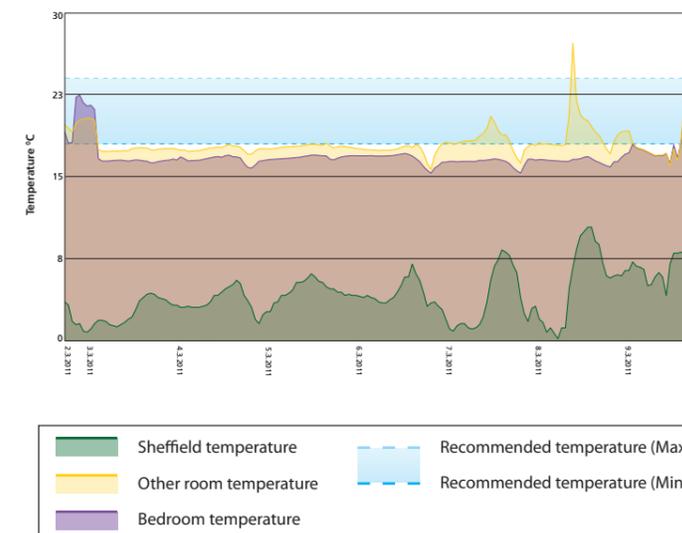
“ Like I say I’m quite a private person, I don’t want anybody knowing my business, I don’t want them knowing, you know.”

Once back home, Enid stays indoors during the evening. She does use the central heating but isn’t always sure when it goes on or off because she struggles to set the controls or see them. She will often put on extra layers of clothing before turning the heating up.

“but if it gets cold I put more clothes on or wrap a fleece round me rather than turn the heating up. That is always my last resort, to turn the heating up.”

She goes to bed about 9pm with a mug of tea to listen to the radio. She uses an electric blanket rather than heating in her bedroom as she thinks it’s cheaper. In addition she has spent most of her life in houses where a heated bedroom wasn’t an option.

“There were nothing in the bedrooms ever. We went to bed with hot water bottles and oven plates and bricks heated in the oven and wrapped up. Believe me you could get a storybook out of me over heating in the bygone days plus looking after six children in six and a half years”.



The graph below demonstrates the variation in temperatures Enid would have in her bedroom and living room during a typical week.