

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**14 NOVEMBER 2019**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET INFORMATION ITEM**

**Cabinet Member for Environment & Transport – Councillor Mike Smith  
Cabinet Member for Health, Leisure & Culture – Councillor Jim Beall**

**ANNUAL FUEL POVERTY ESTIMATES & AFFORDABLE WARMTH MEASURES ACROSS  
STOCKTON-ON-TEES 2018/19**

**SUMMARY**

This report seeks to:

- Provide an update on the Government's national, regional and local Fuel Poverty Estimates.
- Update Members on 'Warm Homes Healthy People' and 'The Big Community Switch' outcomes in 2018/19 which has:
  - supported 297 households through Warm Homes Healthy People interventions
  - collectively saved £31,713 per annum for 213 households through the Big Community Switch
  - Identified and secured £728,746 of previously unclaimed benefits for vulnerable individuals
  - improved the energy efficiency of fuel poor households
- Outline the continuing efforts to tackle fuel poverty and promote affordable warmth across Stockton-on-Tees.

**REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT**

The report is to highlight the partnership working across Stockton-on-Tees to address fuel poverty and promote affordable warmth and in doing so the contribution towards the following Council Plan Policy Principles:

- assisting people whose circumstances make them vulnerable
- supporting people who are financially excluded
- tackling inequality through improving affordable housing and tackling fuel poverty

**DETAIL**

**Fuel Poverty – The Context**

1. The Government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) produce an annual Fuel Poverty Estimate for England. There is an 18 month time lag on

the publication of fuel poverty information as a result of the way it is calculated using wide ranging data sources, therefore the most recent release in June 2019 relates to the situation in the 2017 calendar year. The most recent statistics highlight:

- the Fuel Poverty estimate for England reduced between 2016 and 2017 from 11.1% to 10.9%, or 2.55 million homes to 2.46 million.
- the estimate for the North East region at 11.8% of households in fuel poverty is the joint third highest amongst the nine English regions and is persistently higher than the national average.
- Table 1 below illustrates the estimate for Stockton-on-Tees during the period 2011 to 2017 and provides a comparison to the estimates for our region and sub-region.

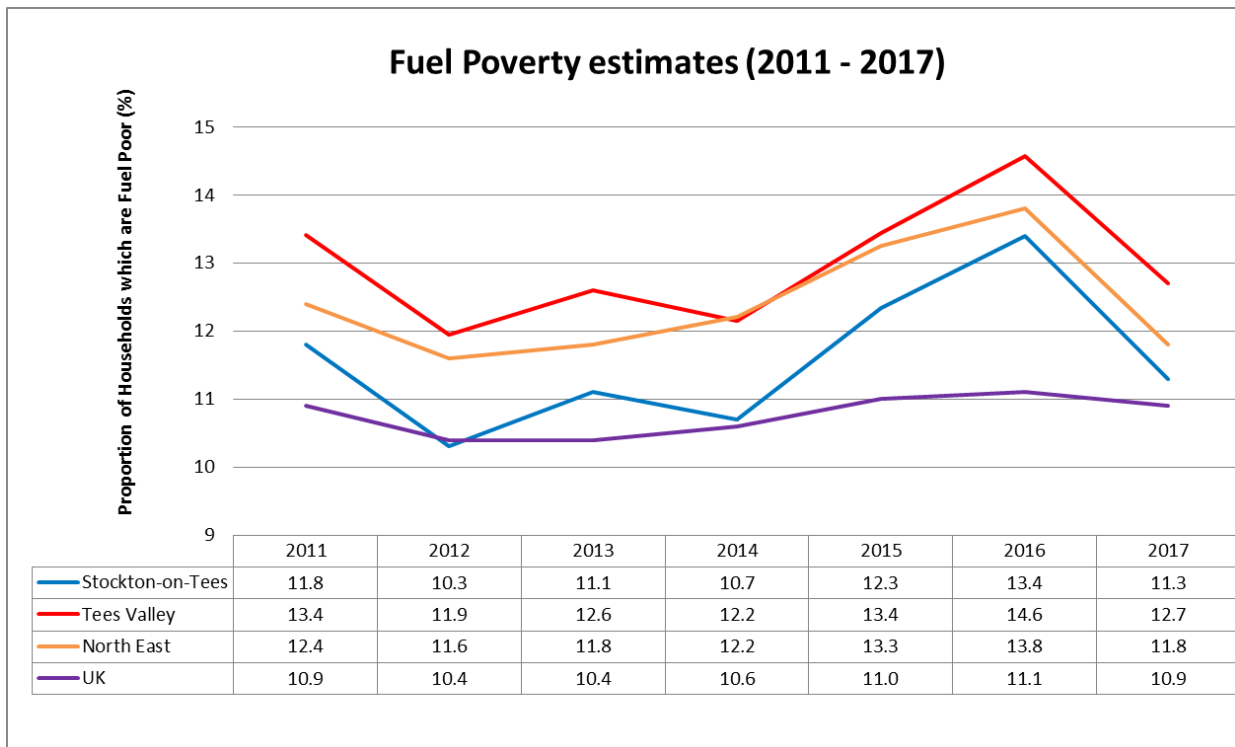


Figure 1

- In 2017 the number of households in Stockton-on-Tees estimated to be in fuel poverty was 9,219 (11.3% of all households) a decrease of 1,637 households since 2016. The Borough's fuel poverty rate is lower than the Regional and Tees Valley estimates and that of our Tees Valley neighbouring authorities as illustrated in Table 2 below.

Fuel Poverty Across the Tees Valley 2017 (BEIS estimate)			
Authority	Estimated number of households	Estimated number of fuel poor households	Proportion of fuel poor households %
Hartlepool	41,844	5,291	12.6
Middlesbrough	59,163	9,106	15.4
Redcar & Cleveland	61,674	7,461	12.1
Stockton-on-Tees	81,906	9,219	11.3
Darlington	48,276	5,883	12.2

Figure 2

### **Fuel Poverty across Stockton-on-Tees**

3. As with so many indicators Stockton-on-Tees is polarised with regard to estimates of fuel poverty, with the number of households failing to adequately heat and power their home ranging from as low as 3.7% in one Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) of Ingleby Barwick to 31.4% an LSOA within Stockton Town Centre Ward.
4. The 2017 published estimates showed a reduction in fuel poverty levels in 104 LSOA's in Stockton-on-Tees whilst levels in 11 LSOA's increased. Data is not published at Ward level an attempt to match the best-fit of LSOA's to Wards has been undertaken and this data shows that fuel poverty levels decreased in all wards in 2017.
5. The highest estimates of fuel poverty are within the areas that almost exhibit the highest levels of disadvantage for other indicators, and these areas include Stockton Town Centre, Parkfield & Oxbridge, Mandale & Victoria, Newtown and Roseworth. Table 3 Below illustrates the respective rates for these five wards during the period 2012 to 2017

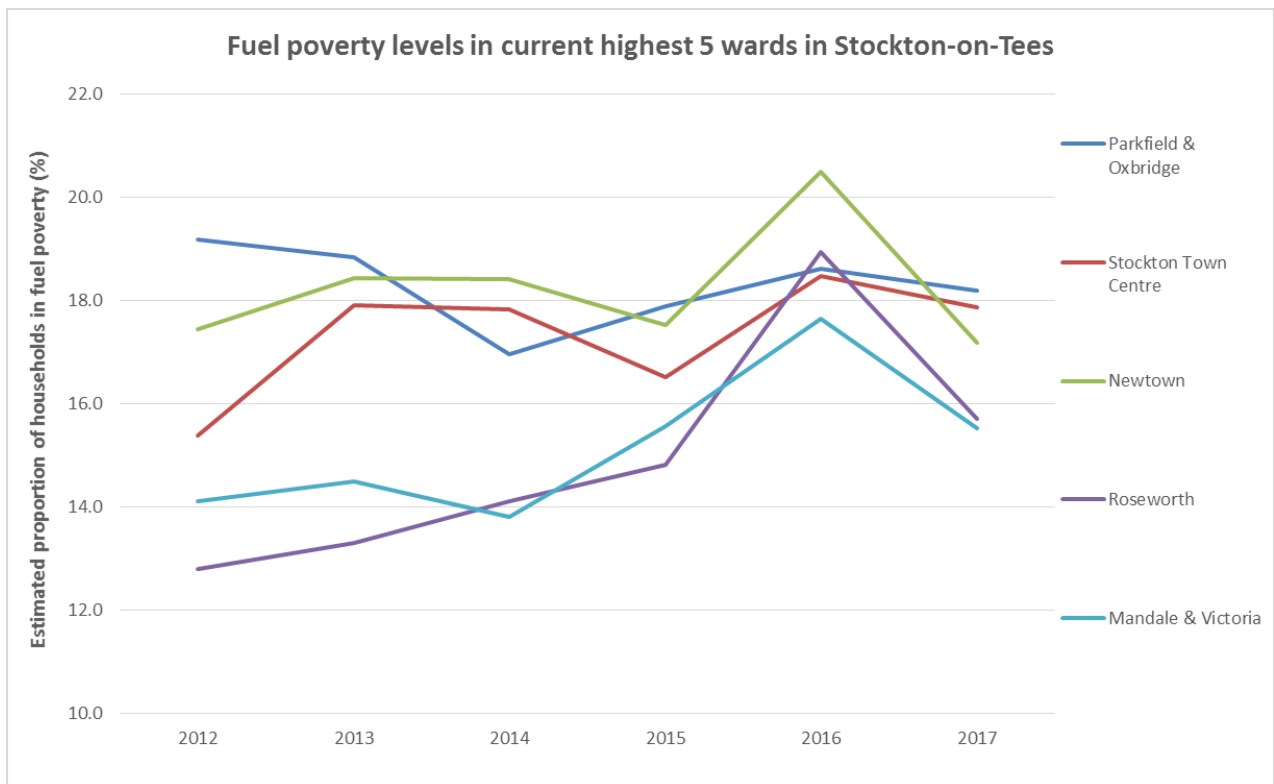


Table 3

6. Understanding the localities with the highest estimates of fuel poverty is key to inform decision making as we move towards increasingly targeted new approaches to addressing fuel poverty. These neighbourhoods will continue to be a focus for a variety of interventions including Warm Homes Healthy People, The Big Community Switch, the potential Warm Homes Fund scheme, ECO3 Flex funding and support, and income maximisation work by Stockton CAB.

### **Initiatives to Address Fuel Poverty**

7. Promoting affordable warmth and tackling fuel poverty remains a top priority in Stockton-on-Tees:
  - 'Tackling inequality through improving affordable housing and fuel poverty' is one of the key policy principles in the Council Plan 2019 – 2022

- Fuel poverty is one of the top 4 priorities in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Environment topic) published in 2018
- To 'continue our work against fuel poverty...to make them warmer and reduce their energy bills' is a current Council Manifesto pledge

### **Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP)**

8. WHHP was first delivered as a pilot programme in the winter of 2011/12 and has evolved into a well-recognised, reputable and valuable partnership project providing a range of assistance measures to vulnerable members of the community whose physical and mental health can be made worse by the cold, and who require support for affordable warmth.
9. Funded by Public Health, the programme is a collaboration of partner organisations, managed by the Council to deliver interventions that support affordable warmth and contribute to reducing fuel poverty. These assistance measures are targeted at the most vulnerable households, particularly those with the highest needs and whose health and wellbeing is more likely to be negatively impacted without intervention. Support is available to those:
  - Over 75 years old
  - In receipt of disability benefits
  - Have a long-term illness made worse by the cold
  - Live with a child under 5 who has a long-term illness made worse by the cold
  - People living with dementia
10. The value and contribution of WHHP has been recognised in many arenas and continues to be hailed as an integral support mechanism to vulnerable households, delivered between October and March each year with last winters Warm Homes Healthy People 8 programme operational from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018 to 31 March 2019.
11. Partners under WHHP 8 and their role in the programme were as follows:
  - Yorkshire Homes (Home Improvement Agency):  
Delivered improvements to homes that make them more energy efficient.  
WHHP investment £35,000
  - Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS):  
Delivered home visits, welfare advice and provided advice to maximise income and reduce energy costs.  
WHHP investment £15,000
  - SBC's Heating Ventilation and Electrical (HV&E) Service:  
Provided service, repair and replacement boilers and heating systems.  
WHHP investment £47,932
  - Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB):  
Deliver emergency heating measures and undertook home visits to assess fire safety.  
WHHP investment £10,000
  - SBC's Customer Contact Centre:  
Provided a dedicated phone line to take referrals, provided customer eligibility checks, made referrals to partners and provided monitoring.  
WHHP investment £15,000

12. WHHP 8 delivered 299 referrals with 297 households supported by the various services and a total of 1220 individual interventions were delivered. Outcomes achieved during WHHP 8 include but are not limited to:
  - £728,746 of previously unclaimed benefits for vulnerable individuals have been identified and claimed.
  - £1,332 has been saved for residents through advice and support around energy tariffs and energy supplier issues
  - Boiler services in 52 households and 63 households received replacement boilers or had repairs undertaken following a breakdown.
  - Improved energy efficiency of households
13. The cumulative impact of WHHP since 2012 demonstrates the positive impact the services have:
  - 2,966 households directly supported
  - 5,196 individual interventions have been delivered including:
    - 716 boiler services, repairs and replacements
    - 1,156 income maximisation sessions for clients
    - Accessed £2,888,243 of previously unclaimed benefit entitlement for vulnerable individuals
    - Delivered 1,482 specific measures to support residents to remain independent in their own home.

### **The Big Community Switch**

14. The Council has promoted 'The Big Community Switch' (BCS) since April 2013 in an attempt to raise awareness of the importance of energy tariff switching and to offer our residents a simple way of securing a value for money deal on their gas and electricity supply. The scheme forms part of our efforts to reduce fuel poverty and promote affordable warmth.
15. The Council has actively promoted thirteen BCS auctions since 2013, and the results of each auction are attached as Annex 1 to this report. Residents who have switched in that time have secured a combined annual saving of £258,221.
16. The BCS is extremely simple and free to take part in. Our independent external partner 'iChoosr' who manage the auctions on behalf of approximately 40 Local Authorities focus on ensuring a good customer experience is a good one. Colleagues and elected Members have first-hand experience of switching via the BCS and can recommend this method as an effective way to save money on fuel bills.
17. Promoting three auctions each year is now our established practice to give more households an opportunity to review their tariff when it suits them. iChoosr manage the BCS on the Council's behalf, free of charge, and supported 42 local authorities to promote the most recent scheme in May 2019. This auction saw 23,868 households sign up nationally, with the average saving for residents across Stockton-on-Tees who switched via the BCS in May 2019 being £244.00 per annum, a demonstration that there are significant savings to be made by switching from standard variable tariff.
18. The autumn 2019 BCS campaign was launched on 13 August 2019 with the auction due to take place on 8 October 2019. The scheme is being widely promoted using social media platforms, press releases, established proven networks including the Locality Forums, Catalyst's significant outreach, and resident's groups. The Council partners and works

closely with the Infinity Partnership and Stockton District Advice and Information Service (SDaIS) on developing and promoting all our affordable warmth schemes to ensure we reach vulnerable households and deliver complimentary services that maximise the income opportunities for those most in need.

### **Continuing efforts to promote Affordable Warmth**

19. A bid was submitted in September 2019 to Round 4 of the national Warm Homes Fund. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has led a partnership bid including all the Tees Valley Authorities in an attempt to secure over £4m million to bring first time gas connections and central heating systems to fuel poor households across the Tees Valley and a 3 year programme of energy advice and support.
20. ECO-flex, under the governments Energy Company Obligation (ECO) programme is an opportunity to bring energy efficiency measures to fuel poor homes using a levy imposed on energy providers. At the time of this report a refreshed Statement of Intent is being developed which is the starting point to actively promote Eco Flex opportunities by directing funding available to ECO registered energy efficiency installers to localities most in need. Eco flex is a route to secure practical improvement works at no cost to the householder or the Council.

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## Annex 1 The Cumulative outcomes of the Big Community Switch April 2013 – May 2019

Switch Event	No. of households registered	No. of households switching	Cumulative Total	Switching Rate	Average household annual saving* (in £)	Total predicted annual savings* (in £)	Highest individual household annual saving* (in £)
May-19	279	59	1404	21%	£244.00	<b>£14,396.00</b>	
Feb-19	329	57	1345	17%	£217.00	<b>£12,369.00</b>	
Oct-18	576	156	1288	27%	£124.00	<b>£19,344.00</b>	
May-18	387	57	1132	15%	£195.75	<b>£11,157.75</b>	£452.00
Feb-18	358	43	1075	12%	£233.41	<b>£10,036.63</b>	£465.00
Oct-17	689	189	1032	27%	£209.00	<b>£39,501.00</b>	£620.00
May-17	333	47	843	14%	£239.12	<b>£11,238.64</b>	£438.00
Feb-17	423	37	796	9%	£121.35	<b>£4,489.95</b>	-
Oct-16	796	191	759	24%	£195.35	<b>£37,311.85</b>	£536.00
Oct-15	691	193	568	28%	£222.00	<b>£42,846.00</b>	£708.00
Oct-14	479	123	375	26%	£195.00	<b>£23,985.00</b>	£480.00
Nov-13	733	93	252	13%	£146.00	<b>£13,578.00</b>	£676.00
Apr-13	1,508	159	159	11%	£113.00	<b>£17,967.00</b>	£320***
<b>Total / Average</b>	7,581	1404		18.5%	£183.92	<b>£258,220.82</b>	