

**THE AFFORDABLE WARMTH STRATEGY
AND THE OUTCOMES OF WARM HOMES HEALTHY PEOPLE 6**

SUMMARY

Levels of fuel poverty have continually fallen in recent years in Stockton-on-Tees from 18.1% in 2010 to 10.7% in 2014 and interventions delivered by the Council and its partners have contributed to this success. However it is an issue that still affects 8585 (10.7%) of households in Stockton-on-Tees; there are also persistent inequalities between wards and Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs).

The inability to keep warm at home is more than just a comfort issue; it has a real impact on health and wellbeing and community spirit. Promoting affordable warmth and tackling fuel poverty remains at the top of our agenda in Stockton-on-Tees and the Affordable Warmth Strategy is an approach to prioritising and addressing key issues.

Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP) is a key intervention in delivering the Affordable Warmth Action Plan. Supported by Public Health, the outcomes from the intervention delivered between October 2016 and the end of March 2017 (WHHP6) are attached in Annex 2 to this report.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Health & Wellbeing Board:

1. Note the report concerning the Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017-19 and the outcomes of Warm Homes Healthy People 6

DETAIL

A refreshed Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan was endorsed by the Housing, Neighbourhood and Affordable Warmth Partnership on 26 January 2017, and is attached as Annex 1 to this report

The key objectives of the strategy are to:

- **Target our efforts and resources**
 - Ensure the most vulnerable residents and the most energy inefficient properties are prioritised and targeted

- **Raise and maintain the profile of fuel poverty and affordable warmth**
 - Ensure affordable warmth and the trap of fuel poverty is recognised at the highest levels within the Council and partner organisations and remains a high priority
 - Monitor the progress of the action plan and its interventions
- **Support residents**
 - Support householders to gain the lowest possible tariffs, and to reduce social inequalities in energy costs
 - Support householders to maximise their income to help pay energy bills
 - Help householders reduce their energy consumption, by improved energy efficiency in their homes, and through better energy usage
 - Provide interventions to support residents in crisis due to cold homes
- **Improve the Housing Stock**
 - Continual improvement in the standard, warmth and energy efficiency of all housing

The strategy's progress measures are:-

No.	Indicator	Target
1	Percentage of households in fuel poverty (as defined by the national Low Income High Cost indicator)	Year on year reduction from a baseline of 10.7%
2	Number of households in fuel poverty receiving home improvements	1500 by March 2018
3	Increase in average SAP rating of domestic housing stock	Year on year increase from a baseline of 61

Levels of Fuel Poverty Across Stockton-on-Tees

The estimated rate of fuel poverty in Stockton-on-Tees in 2014 (the most recent estimate available) is 10.7%, representing 8585 households. Stockton-on-Tees consistently has the lowest rate of Fuel Poverty across the Tees Valley as shown below:-

	2012 Estimate	2013 Estimate	2014 estimate
Darlington	11.8	12.5%	12.6%
Hartlepool	11.6	12.2%	11.8%
Middlesbrough	15.1	15.4%	14.3%
Redcar	11.4	12.1%	11.8%
Stockton	10.3	11.1%	10.7%

The rate of fuel poverty across Stockton-on-Tees has reduced from 18.1% to 10.7% in the past four years.

According to the most recent (2014) estimates, 19 of the 26 wards in Stockton-on-Tees demonstrated decreasing levels of fuel poverty whilst seven had increasing levels. The next release of Government fuel poverty estimates is due in June 2017 and it will be a priority to discern any further trends in order to further target our approach to reach those in the most need.

Progress Towards Achieving the Affordable Warmth Strategy

The reduction in fuel poverty has been achieved through partnership working, preventative and reactive measures with energy suppliers, funders and third sector partners including:-

- Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council has actively promoted the Big Community Switch (BCS) each autumn since 2013 and as a trial a low-key promotion in February 2017. The Big Community Switch is a national campaign to secure value for money deals for residents on gas and electricity by the power of collective purchasing. The BCS has engaged 759 households to sign up, switch and collectively save £141,223. The average household saving produced by the October 2016 switch was £214. Our success with a national provider also now earns us an income directly ploughed back into affordable warmth offers.
- Warm Homes Healthy People (WHHP) is a partnership project **funded by Public Health** to provide help and support to some of the Borough's most vulnerable residents at a time when it is most needed. One call to the Council's Customer Contact Centre can provide help with :-
 - emergency heating
 - energy efficiency advice/support and practical help to switch tariff
 - welfare benefits advice
 - home handyperson service
 - for those in receipt of qualifying benefits – boiler servicing and repairs

Since its inception in 2012, 4,667 referrals have been processed and 6,666 specific interventions have been delivered. A key element of the WHHP offer is income maximisation; since 2012 this service has identified and secured over £1,051,000 of previously unclaimed benefit entitlement being brought into the Borough.

- A £14.8m programme of physical measures under ECO to improve housing stock irrespective of tenure, reduce household fuel bills and contribute to health and well-being improvements has installed no less than 4999 measures. This has included cavity wall and loft insulation, new efficient boilers and one of the largest area based, external wall insulation schemes in the country improving over 3000 properties, leading to measurable SAP increases and significant financial savings. Independent academic research has confirmed the energy and money saving benefits of this investment.
- Stockton District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS) piloted an Energy Advice Centre on Stockton's High Street during 2015/16 bringing multiple agencies together to provide practical energy advice under one roof; this pilot supported over 2,500 people in 2015/6 and saved those who participated a confirmed £46,520. Additionally 241 front line staff were trained in fuel poverty awareness and where to refer clients. This experience was instrumental in SDAIS securing the award of Energy Champion from the National CAB in March 2017.

- The convention for expressing the thermal efficiency of a domestic property is the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP). SAP ratings are scored from 1 to 100 with 1 being the lowest. The significant investment in priority wards across Stockton-on-Tees to provide large scale external wall insulation combined with the efforts of Registered Providers have increased the average SAP from 60.68 in March 2015 to 62.88 in February 2017. Increasing the average SAP is a specific performance measure within the Affordable Warmth Strategy.

Activity for 2017/18

The Affordable Warmth Action Plan sets out the scope of activity to be delivered during 2017/18, including:-

- Promoting The Big Community Switch, tariff switching programme in October 2017
- Delivering Warm Homes Healthy People 7
- Stockton District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS) have secured funding from the National CAB to deliver the Energy Champions, launching in Spring 2017 to include:-
 - Promotions to encourage tariff/supplier switching
 - Targeted take up in the wards with the highest fuel poverty
 - Targeted work with vulnerable people to promote amongst other things the Priority Services Register
 - Promote awareness of entitlement to the Warm Home Discount, accessing grants e.g. Disabled Facilities Grants
 - Advice on energy efficiency measures within the home
 - Advice on managing energy/bills/debt
 - Training of frontline staff
- Develop closer working relationships with primary care services to ensure that our efforts are reaching the most vulnerable and reinforcing the health improvement outcomes of tackling fuel poverty.
- The launch of ECO2 – a fund of money created by a levy on energy producers to implement practical measures to residents' homes.
- The development of an energy club where residents who choose to sign up will receive regular updates on all the incentives and promotions available to promote affordable warmth.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Affordable Warmth Action Plan is being delivered by a variety of Council Services and contributions from external partners. The direct cost to Public Health in 2016/17 was £100,000 specifically to deliver Warm Homes Healthy People 6.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

RISK ASSESSMENT

The risks arising from the production of this report can be categorised as low.

CONSULTATION

The content of the report reflects discussion between colleagues within the Council and partners.

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References:

1. BEIS (2016) 'Fuel Poverty Estimates by Local Authority Area'