

**Report of the Director of Public Health and the Director of Environment and Housing
Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board**

Date: 10th November 2014

Subject: Fuel Poverty Scrutiny Update

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. In 2011 the Safer and Stronger Communities Board launched an Inquiry into fuel poverty which outlined twenty recommendations, eleven of which remain open.
2. This report outlines how the remaining eleven recommendations have been achieved, embedded into existing work programmes or are no longer relevant due to changes in policy.

Recommendations

3. To note the content of this report and the progress in implementing affordable warmth actions across the city.
4. To note the accompanying tracking report providing an update against recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry (2012) and agree to now close this Inquiry, with key outstanding issues to be subsumed into the work programme for the coming year.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To provide the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board with a progress update in addressing Scrutiny Board recommendations in relation to affordable warmth, following the 2012 inquiry.
- 1.2 To provide Scrutiny Board with evidence that the recommendations have now been completed, subsumed within existing work programmes or are no longer relevant, in order to close this inquiry.

2 Background information

- 2.1 In 2011, the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board launched an inquiry into fuel poverty as a result of substantial increases in the number of households living in fuel poverty across the country and changes to grant assistance that had been available to assist households in fuel poverty nationally.
- 2.2 An inquiry report listing 20 recommendations was published in April 2012, which officers responded to. Subsequently, scrutiny board has received progress updates in October 2012 and October 2013. There are presently eleven outstanding recommendations on which we are reporting.
- 2.3 Matching households with practical help has become more problematic since long running energy efficiency schemes such as Warm Front and the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target, have been replaced by the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). This market based funding mechanism provides less funding overall on a more intermittent basis than the schemes it has replaced.
- 2.4 Therefore, Leeds City Council has needed to find additional resources to ensure that vulnerable people are able to heat their homes. Examples include the discretionary fuel poverty fund, which can contribute towards heating and energy efficiency improvements where a household is on a low income or suffers from a cold related illness, and public health's winter warmth funding, providing assistance to vulnerable people over the winter period. These resources are limited in scope and have to be targeted towards those most in need.
- 2.5 Since the scrutiny report was written, Professor Hills has completed a review of fuel poverty and the Government has accepted his suggestion to change the definition of fuel poverty to one based on households experiencing low incomes and high modelled fuel costs.
- 2.6 As a result of this, the Government has recently consulted on a new fuel poverty strategy outlining new targets and approaches to tackling fuel poverty across the Country which the Leeds Affordable Warmth Partnership has responded to. The targets proposed were relatively unambitious and no further sources of funding other than the existing Energy Company Obligation were proposed for the alleviation of fuel poverty in vulnerable households.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Currently eleven recommendations remain outstanding, all of which we believe have been completed, embedded in existing work programmes, or rendered irrelevant by changes to legislation or other circumstances.
- 3.2 The following recommendations (in bold) are outstanding:
- 3.2.1 **Recommendation 5 – That the Director of Public Health in Leeds works closely with the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to develop a clear strategy around fuel poverty data collection.** We believe that this recommendation has been achieved as we purchase EPC data on an annual basis to ascertain the efficiency of the housing stock and have an established procedure for using Council held benefits data to inform low income households of energy efficiency schemes.
- 3.2.2 **Recommendation 8 (i) – That Area Committees nominate a Fuel Poverty Champion to drive forward local action in addressing fuel poverty problems associated with their particular areas.** We believe that this is no longer relevant as some Community Committees now include fuel poverty within the Health and Wellbeing Champions portfolio as a result of the 2011 Area Review Report.
- 3.2.3 **Recommendation 8 (ii) – That the Area Committee Fuel Poverty Champions Liaise with their respective Locality Health and Wellbeing Managers to agree the appointment of one Fuel Poverty Champion from each of the 3 localities onto the Leeds Affordable Warmth Partnership.** We believe that this action has been achieved as we continue to liaise with the Locality Health and Wellbeing Managers to ensure that Community Committee members with a particular interest in fuel poverty are invited to the Affordable Warmth Partnership Meetings from each Locality Area.
- 3.2.4 **Recommendation 9 (i) – That the Health and Wellbeing Board works with the local Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure that a consistent and systematic approach to identifying the needs of vulnerable householders at risk of fuel poverty is being adopted as part of the developing risk stratification process.** We believe that this action has been embedded within the adult health and care integration prevention work programme. Updates will be provided to the Cold Weather Plan Partnership Group which reports to the Health Protection Board, reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.2.5 **Recommendation 9 (ii) – That the Health and Wellbeing Board works with the local Clinical Commissioning Groups to ensure that a consistent approach is being adopted by the developing integrated health and social care teams in ensuring that, once identified, those at risk of fuel poverty are effectively being referred to appropriate support schemes.** This action will be embedded within the adult health and care service specification for the Neighbourhood Teams, for next year the CCGs will aim to include fuel poverty as part of their commitment to supporting vulnerable older people. We therefore believe that this recommendation has been achieved.

- 3.2.6 **Recommendation 10 (i) – That the Executive Board and Health and Wellbeing Board fully supports and regularly monitors the development of a simple, systematic referral pathway and effective uptake for fuel poverty support from key health and council services (this may be by using the Multi Agency Referral Scheme (MARS) if appropriate).** We believe that this recommendation has largely been achieved as the Energy Champions scheme currently provides a simple and direct way for health and social care professionals to refer households directly to assistance through the Warm Homes Service, and we continue to update other teams and organisations on scheme availability and referral options through the Hotspots network. Additionally, we will continue to work to ensure that local initiatives, such as the Patient Empowerment Plan in West Leeds can refer households to assistance where available.
- 3.2.7 **Recommendation 13 – In promoting future based schemes aimed at achieving affordable warmth, we recommend that the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods works closely with the Head of Communications and Marketing to develop an appropriate framework to assist in encouraging greater take up of schemes.** The communications team are closely involved in all stages of planning and executing our energy efficiency schemes. They are also closely involved in all stages of winter warmth planning therefore we believe that this recommendation has been achieved.
- 3.2.8 **Recommendation 16 – That the Director of Public Health in Leeds works closely with the Clinical Commissioning Groups to look at the potential of providing longer term funding to maintain the existing Warm Homes Service (which has been partially funded by the time limited Department of Health Warm Homes Healthy People scheme) administered by Care and Repair.** Leeds Health Protection Board has been established during 2014 and all local partners from health are represented at this Board which is a subgroup of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Office of the Director of Public Health has committed 200K recurrent funding to ensure that vulnerable households stay safe and warm over winter. This includes funding for the Warm Homes Service.

Leeds City Council has successfully worked with NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Groups to provide funding towards heating improvements and repairs, as well as developing referral systems into existing services. We recommend that this action continues to be monitored by the Cold Weather Plan Partnership Group, reporting to the Health Protection Board under the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 3.2.9 **Recommendation 18 – That the Director of Public Health in Leeds works with the Health and Wellbeing Board and Clinical Commissioning Groups to begin developing and exploring opportunities to lever in financial support for a broader programme of preventative measures aimed at tackling the hazard of excess cold across the city.** Leeds City Council has successfully levered in funds from various sources to ensure that excess cold is tackled. This has included the Discretionary Fuel Poverty Fund, Warm Homes Healthy People funding, CCG funding and funding allocated through Public Health. In addition, we provide support to our Third Sector partners such as Care & Repair to apply for

additional funding themselves. We therefore believe that this recommendation has been achieved.

- 3.2.10 **Recommendation 19 – That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on developing a strategy with key partners, including the CAB and Advice Leeds, for undertaking benefit checks on an annual basis accompanied with a service offer for conducting fuel tariff checks.** Leeds City Council commissions an annual project with Chapeltown CAB as part of the winter warmth campaign to provide combined fuel bill and income advice. In addition, our partner organisation, Groundwork Leeds has successfully funded projects through the Department of Energy and Climate Change's Big Energy Saving Network to provide fuel bill and income maximisation advice to households as well as training to other local organisations over two years. We therefore believe that this recommendation has been achieved.
- 3.2.11 **Recommendation 20 - That the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods leads on undertaking a cost-benefit and risk analysis for the Council to bulk purchase domestic heating fuel for householders. The findings of this analysis should be reported back to the Executive Board and Scrutiny for consideration within 3 months of the South Holland documents becoming available.** Although Leeds City Council did take part in a pilot project with Community Energy Direct, we believe that this recommendation has since been superseded as the community switching schemes that took place around the country were unable to achieve a below market tariff as had been hoped. This has become even less likely since DECC have worked to simplify the range of energy tariffs on offer. However, Leeds City Council is currently working with the Core Cities Low Carbon and Energy Portfolio Group to develop Core Cities owned energy suppliers, or formal relationships with smaller companies, through which we aim to offer stable and fair energy tariffs to households.
- 3.3 All progress reports are provided in greater detail in the accompanying tracking report (see appendix 1).
- 3.4 There are currently a number of partnerships and structures in Leeds to enable us to promote action on affordable warmth across the City. These include the Leeds Affordable Warmth Partnership which allows the Council and partners from the voluntary, housing and health sectors to contribute to action on fuel poverty. The Cold Weather Plan Partnership group has been established across directorates to ensure that all teams within the Council are equipped to help the most vulnerable people where necessary and are promoting a unified message around keeping warm in winter. Referral schemes such as the Energy Champions and Hotspots schemes ensure that partners within the Council, health and voluntary sectors can refer vulnerable people to help.
- 3.5 The policy context of affordable warmth has changed considerably since the Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy was last updated in 2011, therefore the Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Team is committed to update this as soon as the Department of Energy and Climate Change have published the new national strategy. This will be done in consultation with the Leeds Affordable Warmth Partnership.

- 3.6 Leeds takes three distinct approaches to alleviating fuel poverty across the City. These allow us to properly target and prioritise resources:
- 3.6.1 Improving energy efficiency in all homes across the City and maximising incomes to reduce the likelihood of fuel poverty. The Wrap Up Leeds free insulation scheme and Decent Homes Programmes have been the largest scale examples of this preventative approach over the past few years. We will continue to pursue this approach through the promotion of the City Region Green Deal/ECO scheme. We also aim to maximise household income, for example through the provision of combined fuel bill and income advice as part of our annual winter warmth campaign and by incorporating referrals to benefits services alongside energy efficiency schemes where appropriate.
 - 3.6.2 Targeting support towards those more likely to be in fuel poverty. In the past this has included projects to install gas mains in formerly all electric estates, or targeted promotion of energy efficiency measures in low income areas, for example, street to street door knocking as part of the Wrap Up Leeds Plus scheme. At present, we are targeting hard to treat properties with insulation through the Green Deal Communities Programme.
 - 3.6.3 Crisis intervention to avoid ill health. The Warm Homes Service, managed by Care and Repair exists to provide heating improvements to vulnerable private sector households suffering from a cold related illness and receives direct referrals from frontline NHS and Adult Social Care staff. Over the winter period, Leeds City Council, funded through Public Health, provides enhanced Warm Homes and Green Doctor services in order to cope with additional demand for emergency heating repairs and support for households during winter as well as providing grants to local Community organisations to support their clients

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.4 This report has been compiled in consultation with the relevant teams within the Council and with reference to the scrutiny recommendations outlined in the accompanying tracking report.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 Where consideration has been given to the impact on equality areas, as defined in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme, this has been referenced within the accompanying tracking report.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The Vision for Leeds is committed to making sure that everybody lives in a decent home and can stay warm by 2030. In addition, the City Priority Plan to 2015 commits the authority to "support more people to live safely in their own homes" and "improve housing conditions and energy efficiency".
- 4.3.2 Affordable warmth has been included as a priority in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013 – 15, as a result of the Scrutiny inquiry on fuel poverty.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 The Marmot Review: Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty, clearly sets out the negative impact that living in cold homes can have on the health of vulnerable people with knock on costs for health and social services. Therefore there is a strong case for supporting and investing in affordable warmth interventions. In an era of shrinking budgets, the Council and partners have to focus on drawing down external funding to support energy efficiency improvements. Recent analysis shows that since the start of 2012, the council has invested over £1.1 million in energy efficiency improvements in private sector homes and attracted over £11.5million of investment. Once loans have been repaid and expected ECO funding secured, this will represent a return on investment of over £18 for each pound invested.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 The report has no direct legal implications and all information is openly accessible.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 This report is intended to outline Leeds' ambition to improve access to affordable warmth. Each action is contained within a separate programme of work that is governed using standard project management practices and each therefore has its own risk profile.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Council has an admirable track record of supporting some of the most vulnerable people in the city to reduce fuel bills through improved energy efficiency. Much of this has been done at very little cost to the householder, through partnership with government and private companies.
- 5.2 The context has changed dramatically over the last two years with the Green Deal loans and ECO grants initially replacing a raft of different programmes. Despite subsequent government policies changes that have reduced the value of ECO and introduced cashback schemes, the Council remains engaged with government, energy companies and contractors and continues to attract external investment to improve energy efficiency.
- 5.3 Remaining actions will be embedded in the work programmes for their respective Directorates and other commissioning organisations, this will also be outlined in the updated Leeds Affordable Warmth Strategy.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 To note the content of this report and the progress in implementing affordable warmth actions across the city;
- 6.2 To note the accompanying tracking report providing an update against recommendations from the Scrutiny Inquiry (2012) and agree to now close this

Inquiry, with key outstanding issues to be subsumed into the work programme for the coming year.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.