

# NORTH SOMERSET



## Fuel Poverty & Home Energy Efficiency Strategy 2010 –2012



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## 1. Foreword

### ***Cllr Elfan Ap Rees - Executive Member for Housing, Strategic Planning, Highways and Economic Development***

I am happy to support the Affordable Warmth Partnership in North Somerset and extremely pleased to see commitment from many local partners and agencies.

Too many households in North Somerset still struggle to adequately heat their homes and maintain a healthy affordable indoor temperature. This Fuel Poverty and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy recognises these important issues and is produced to help reduce the numbers of fuel poor households, at the same time improving home energy efficiency, making a positive contribution to reducing household carbon emissions.

Provision of affordable warmth and improvement in home energy efficiency cannot be achieved by North Somerset Council alone. Joint partnership working between public, private and voluntary sector is essential to improve the lives of those affected by fuel poverty and the poor energy efficiency of homes.

I therefore fully support this work and wish all partners every success in delivering the targets in the action plan.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'E. Ap Rees', written over a horizontal line.

**Cllr Elfan Ap Rees**

**Endorsement from Jenny Saunders, Chief Executive, NEA, (the national energy action charity)**



NEA, the national energy efficiency charity, was established in 1981 to develop and promote energy efficiency strategies and services to tackle the heating and insulation problems of low-income households, to achieve affordable warmth and eradicate fuel poverty.

Cold homes, high health-care costs, cold-related illnesses, excess winter mortality and housing in a poor state of repair, are the visible signs of fuel poverty, a problem that affects millions of households in the UK.

There is a clear Government commitment to eradicate fuel poverty for all households by 2016. NEA believes that local authorities are the key agents in co-ordinating the delivery of strategies to achieve this objective. In developing this strategy, North Somerset District Council and its partner agencies in the health and social care, voluntary and private sectors have demonstrated that effective partnership working is the key to success.

I applaud all those who have contributed to this document, and wish them every success in implementing a strategy that will provide households with the means to heat their homes to the standard required for health and comfort, at a price they can afford.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jenny Saunders'.

**Jenny Saunders, Chief Executive of NEA**

## **2 Working together for affordable warmth and improving energy efficiency: a joint policy statement**

North Somerset Council is committed to supporting the eradication of fuel poverty and provision of affordable warmth through energy efficient accommodation for all households.

To ensure progress towards this objective the Council is working in partnership with several agencies across, health, environment, and community safety.

This strategy is aimed at reducing the impact on our environment and improving the health and well-being of residents across North Somerset.

NHS North Somerset is very pleased to be a part of North Somerset's Affordable Warmth Partnership. The link between cold homes and health related illness is now widely known. We are committed to reducing the number of hospital admissions and excess winter deaths by actively working with our partners to assist in the identification of households suffering from fuel poverty and encourage residents to obtain the help they need.



**Becky Pollard**  
**Director of Public Health - North Somerset**

## **3. Introduction**

North Somerset District Council approved their Fuel Poverty Strategy in 2001; as part of Home Energy Conservation Act requirements and is committed to delivery of this strategy through partnership working. This strategy builds on the initial work and successes to date and combine Fuel Poverty & Domestic Energy Efficiency issues, tailored to meet the varied and specific demands of the district.

This strategy strengthens the combined work of partners over the last decade and aims to focus delivery of affordable warmth and improvement in energy efficiency in response to the challenges of rising domestic fuel costs.

#### **4. Fuel poverty**

Fuel poverty is a complex issue that needs to be tackled across the board, in partnership with numerous agencies.

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income on all domestic fuel use<sup>1</sup>. Fuel Poverty can be a consequence of:

- Low income and debt
- Poor household insulation and ventilation standards
- Inefficient and/or expensive heating system
- Lack of access or availability of affordable fuel and/or tariff options
- Under-occupation of homes/size of homes
- Householder behaviour; and
- Rising fuel prices

In many cases, households may be forced to choose between expenditure on fuel or other essential items. Faced with such stark choices many households may ration their fuel consumption and in doing so put themselves at increased risk of cold-related illness or even death.

The very young, the elderly and those living with a disability or long-term illness are deemed especially vulnerable to fuel poverty as they tend to spend more time in the home and so their need for fuel is greater than other households.

Fuel poverty results in the household experiencing to a lesser or greater degree either fuel debt (i.e. they cannot afford to pay their fuel bills), or an inadequately heated home. If the home is inadequately heated the householders may suffer from cold-related health conditions for example pneumonia. When a property is inadequately heated it can lead to condensation and damp conditions, which increase the rate of asthma and respiratory diseases.

It is estimated that increased cold-related and respiratory diseases, associated with fuel poverty, cost the NHS £1 billion per annum. Fuel poverty can also lead to the deterioration of the property itself and associated increased maintenance/repair costs.

#### **5. How will the strategy benefit the residents of North Somerset?**

During the preparatory work NEA analysed data, indicators and information to evaluate the scale of the problem in North Somerset. The strategy aims **to** ensure fuel poverty in North Somerset can be dealt with in a planned and systematic way.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Fuel Poverty Strategy (2001) – For target setting Government includes Housing Benefit and Income Support for Mortgage Interest in its definition for target setting. This issue remains fiercely debated.

A holistic approach is very effective and enables the services of partner organisations to be utilised to maximise the help that a resident can receive once they have been identified for assistance.

By eradicating fuel poverty we are ensuring that all households have the opportunity to achieve affordable warmth. Affordable warmth is the achievement of a minimum safe average temperature at a cost which represents no more than 7.6 - 10% of the householder's disposable income. A comfortable standard is defined as an average of 21°C in the living room, and 18°C everywhere else.

This means that a householder need spend no more than 10% of their disposable income on their total fuel bill. To ensure that the household can achieve affordable warmth we need to consider the factors causing fuel poverty in turn and how a local authority can address each issue. These issues are:

- Health (especially in winter)
- Income level
- Energy efficiency of the home
- Householders awareness of energy efficiency and of payment options for fuel
- Size of property
- Price of fuel

## **5.1 Better health**

The links between fuel poverty, poor housing and ill health are well established.

Cold homes may exacerbate problems associated with cardiovascular illness and the onset of stroke or heart attacks, whilst damp and poorly ventilated homes are associated with a range of respiratory and allergic conditions such as bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma etc. Cold homes may also impact on conditions such as rheumatism or arthritis and may affect those people with poor mobility, thus increasing the risk of falls and other household accidents.

Living in cold, damp and poorly ventilated homes is not only uncomfortable but may also be stressful in itself and impact negatively on the mental health of householders. This may be compounded by anxiety about high bills, fuel debt or other fuel poverty related factors. The educational attainment of school age children may also be affected if they do not have a warm space to study and are forced to share general living space or need to take time off from school due to cold-related illnesses.

Householders who are permanently sick or disabled and unable to work may require their heating to be on more than employed householders as they are likely to spend more time at home; this means their fuel bills will be higher whilst their incomes may be lower and thus these households are more likely to be in fuel poverty.

In 2007-08, one of the highest costs to the NHS in North Somerset was circulatory disease<sup>2</sup>. These costs are adjusted to take account of differences between population relating to age, sex, and social deprivation.

During the months from December to March the number of deaths recorded (winter deaths) well exceeds the average death rate for the remainder of the year. Excess winter mortality rates vary according to the severity of the winter. Excess winter deaths in 2007-08, for North Somerset were 156 but given the severe winter of 2009/10 this figure is expected to rise.

## **5.2 Income level**

By definition those suffering from fuel poverty are on low incomes. Local authorities are in a key position to ensure that householders are aware of the benefits they are entitled to and encourage them to apply. This will involve working together with the Citizens Advice Bureau, health authorities and the voluntary sector, to ensure that officers working with households can give appropriate information and advice to those who need it. The significant group are the elderly and disabled who suffer more acutely during periods of cold weather.

## **5.3 Energy Efficiency of the home**

The most effective way of ensuring a householder achieves affordable warmth, is to minimise the amount they need to spend on hot water and heating systems. This will also reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This involves improving the fabric of the property to minimise the heat loss, ensuring that there is an efficient heating system with appropriate controls, installing low energy lights and where possible installing low energy appliances. Where viable installing a renewable technology for heating and hot water.

The most recent Private Sector House Condition Survey (2005) found the following:

- The SAP rating for private housing in the District was estimated at 52, in line with the national average of 51 for all private housing. The equivalent NHER rating is estimated at an average of 6.2.
- The lower quartile SAP rating for private housing was 44. 14497 dwellings (19%) have a SAP rating of 40 or below.

Average annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions were estimated at 9.36 tonnes resulting in total annual emissions of 135665 tonnes. Average annual energy expenditure was estimated at £907 per dwelling giving a total annual household energy bill of £13.151M. Lower levels of energy efficiency are found in the Old Weston and Rural Areas, in the private-rented sector, in self contained flats by conversion, and in bedsit HMO's.

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<sup>2</sup> Health In North Somerset - Annual Report of the Director of Public Health, 2007-2008

Home energy efficiency is influenced by both heating and insulation characteristics. Underlying the energy efficiency of private housing in the District the following attributes apply:

- 5215 dwellings (6.7%) lack any form of appropriate loft insulation, an additional 9533 dwellings (12.3%) contain loft insulation levels below 100mm. Evidence of enhanced insulation is however apparent. 16641 dwellings (21.5%) offer loft insulation of 100mm, 30765 dwellings (39.8%) of 100mm - 150mm and 14816 dwellings (19.1%) of 200mm or above. The loft insulation profile for the North Somerset area was better than the national average where 70% of dwellings were estimated to contain loft insulation to a minimum 100mm (4 inches) thickness. The current building regulation requirement is 270mm (10 inches).
- Excluding dwellings of solid wall construction (14051 dwgs, 18%); 9053 dwellings exhibit evidence of additional wall insulation since built. This represents only 14% of dwellings with cavities; therefore a key element of the strategy will focus on maximising the installation of cavity wall insulation.
- 61839 dwellings (80.0%) were double glazed, the remaining 15495 dwellings (20.0%) offer single glazing. Levels of double glazing within the stock were significantly above the national average of 51%. 54690 dwellings (70.7%) offer effective draught proofing to doors.
- 71355 dwellings (92.3%) offer full central heating, with an additional 966 dwellings (1.2%) offering partial heating systems. Gas represents the main heating fuel (85.9%). Levels of full central heating were above the national average which was estimated at 86%.

Information on domestic energy and home insulation from the survey was subjected to a National Home Energy Rating Profile at Level '0' as a test of energy efficiency within the private housing stock. Several indicators are produced by the NHER system.

- SAP – Standard Assessment Procedure using information on appliances and insulation to profile energy efficiency. This permits the grading of properties on a score of 1-100. At the time of the survey the UK average score was estimated at 51, (North Somerset score was 52) with construction to current building regulations level achieving a score of 65.
- BEPI – Building Energy Performance Index profiling dwelling performance on insulation. Ranging from 1 to over 100, a score of 100 signifies insulation standards at current building regulations.
- CO<sub>2</sub> – Average annual emissions of Co<sub>2</sub> measured in tonnes.
- ENERGY COSTS – Average annual energy costs for domestic space and water heating and lighting.

## 5.4 Householders awareness/ understanding of energy efficiency issues

Homeowners require an awareness and knowledge to operate their home in an energy efficient manner; this knowledge alone can often ensure they achieve affordable warmth. Things that a householder needs to know are:

*How to operate the heating system* – there are many myths around that result in a householder consuming a lot more fuel than required. For example common myths include, “it is cheaper to keep the immersion heater on all the time rather than putting it on for half an hour prior to the hot water being required”. “Using the gas central heating system is more expensive than using bottled gas heaters or electric bar heaters to heat the home.”

*Settings of heating controls* – such as the room thermostat, the hot water cylinder thermostat, input and output controls on a storage heater.

*Paying and budgeting for fuel* – many householders use pre-payment meters to budget for fuel. However they do not realise that this is probably costing them considerably more per unit of fuel consumed and in the standing charge compared to other forms of payment.

*Running costs of electricity*- it is useful to know roughly which electrical appliances in the home use the most electricity and when purchasing new white goods the importance of energy labelling.

*The benefits of low energy light bulbs (CFLs)* – what savings can be made, which wattage is appropriate and where they should be installed.

*Condensation* – how to control and prevent condensation and mould growth in the home.

*Simple low cost no cost measures* – such as having thick lined curtains and shutting them at dusk, putting foil behind radiators and shelves above etc.

North Somerset Council in conjunction with the Environment Agency has produced a series of energy efficiency fact sheets to help householders become more energy efficient at home and to reduce their fuel costs, these fact sheets are available on line.

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requires local housing authorities to report annually to central Government on the home energy efficiency improvements across the domestic sector. The original target was set at 30% improvement on 1996 levels; to be reached by 2010

Since 1996 a programme of education, advice, information and promotion with insulation and heating grant and discount schemes has been successful in improving

levels of energy efficiency in the domestic sector. In North Somerset to end of March 2008 the improvement was 28.2%, with a reduction of 22,420 tonnes of carbon.

## **5.5 Under occupancy**

Elderly people often live alone in large houses, which can lead to difficulties with maintaining adequate temperatures on a fixed income. In the public sector this can be addressed by allocations policies and incentives to move; encouraging low-income elderly residents to move to smaller accommodation.

However in the private sector this is more complex and there are limited choices but through the Older People Housing Strategy we will expand available information and increase move on opportunities.

## **5.6 Price of fuel**

Since January 2003, gas prices have increased by 147% and electricity by 94%<sup>3</sup> there are still large variations in price depending on the payment method. The cheapest payment method can be by direct debit, or on line but this obviously prohibits those without a bank account or access to a computer.

Many fuel companies have prompt payment discounts. Householders in fuel poverty often tend to use prepayment meters to pay off debts or to help them budget. However this is the most expensive form of paying for fuel. Most fuel companies charge a premium per unit of energy consumed as well as an increased standing charge. All fuel companies have alternative budgeting methods, which work out cheaper. Householders need to have this information to hand before choosing their payment method and when they pay.

Social tariffs are another tool in helping vulnerable customers to afford their fuel bills. A social tariff is taken to mean any special payment arrangement, over and above those specified by supplier's Licence Conditions, devised with a view to benefiting disadvantaged energy consumers. The Government's commitment to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016 has focused the minds of suppliers, and the energy regulator Ofgem, on how innovative tariffs can contribute to this wider policy objective. Consequently there have been a number of tariff initiatives developed by companies to address specific elements of fuel poverty.

## **6. Measuring Fuel Poverty**

In order to ensure that fuel poverty is being eradicated a way of **measuring** the current level of fuel poverty is required. This can then be monitored to ensure that the numbers of householders suffering from fuel poverty is actually being reduced.

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<sup>3</sup> NEA, September 2008

Measuring fuel poverty accurately is, however, extremely difficult, as it requires information on:

- income level of the household
- energy efficiency levels of their home
- how the occupants control their heating system and pay for fuel.

Since it is unlikely that this information will ever be to hand for each specific household, it becomes necessary to use indicators of fuel poverty rather than true measures.

One indicator is the energy rating of the property e.g. SAP rating. Properties with a low energy rating are more likely to have occupants in fuel poverty than those with a high energy rating. The SAP<sup>4</sup> and the NHER are both indicators that can assist with eradicating fuel poverty by drawing attention to those properties most likely to be prone to households in fuel poverty.

Income levels can be obtained through housing needs and stock surveys but households are usually reluctant to reveal true household income information.

All Local Authorities are required to report on National Indicator 187 (% of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with low and high energy efficiency rating) to monitor performance to eradicate fuel poverty. This translates to number of people on means tested benefits occupying a dwelling with a SAP rating of less than 35 or greater than 65.

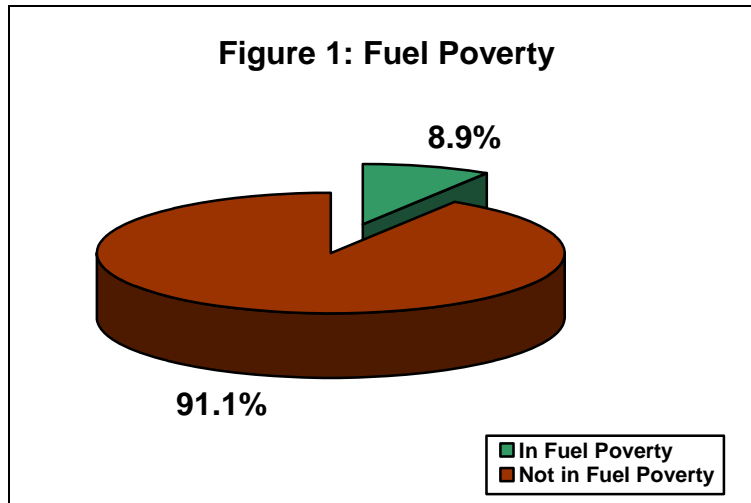
An issue with the above definition is that it only captures households on low income benefits and ignores other groups who could be in fuel poverty but may not be easily identifiable. This strategy is aimed at being inclusive to all households regardless of low-income benefit entitlement. Households in accommodation with a SAP rating of less than 65 can potentially be in fuel poverty, this could particularly affect elderly and disabled groups.

National Indicator NI187 has simplified the reporting of fuel poverty for local authorities by measuring the energy rating of homes with occupants on means-tested benefits. Whilst this is clearly an imperfect system of measurement it does provide a definite methodology to be followed and by using this methodology year on year annual progress can be measured and reported.

The following chart shows the numbers of households in North Somerset receiving Council Tax Benefit who live in a property with an energy rating (SAP) below 35 and are therefore classed as being fuel poor.

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<sup>4</sup> SAP – Standard Assessment Procedure is used to determine the energy efficiency standard of a dwelling on a scale of 1-100. Basically, the higher the rating the better the energy efficiency of a property.



**Latest information using data from survey conducted in 2009 (NI187)**

The indicator is split into two distinct parts. NI187a measures the percentage of vulnerable households that live in a home with poor energy efficiency. This is measured by using those on income-related benefits (council tax or housing benefit) as a proxy for vulnerability and then measuring the percentage of those sampled who live in a property with an energy rating of below SAP35.

NI187b measures the percentage of vulnerable households that live in a home with good energy efficiency. Like NI187a, this is measured by using those on income-related benefits as a proxy for vulnerability but measures the percentage of those sampled who live in a property with an energy rating of above SAP65.

### **6.1 Targets in North Somerset (NI 187)**

A survey was carried out in February 2009 to establish a baseline for this indicator. This was conducted externally using the methodology agreed with Department for Communities and Local Government. It found that 8.9% of households on means-tested benefits live in homes with a SAP rating of below 35 and so are in particular danger of fuel poverty. It also found that 36.1% of these households live in homes with a SAP rating of over 65 which puts them at a much reduced danger of Fuel Poverty. These findings have formed the basis of the targets for the following 4 years – Table below.

Year	NI187a	NI187b	Homes Improved	Comment
2008-9 (baseline)	8.9%	36.1%		
2009-10	7.4%	37.1%	600	Review end 09/10
2010-11	5.9%	38.1%	600	
2011-12	4.4%	39.1%	600	
2012-13	2.9%	40.1%	600	

The progress made in reaching these targets will be reported annually using a similar approved methodology.

As mentioned above, some caution must be applied to the baseline position because other groups (i.e. those not on these benefits) must be targeted to ensure that fuel poverty is fully addressed in North Somerset. This strategy will target all groups in fuel poverty in North Somerset.

The action plan will be reviewed and amended annually to ensure that a balanced, holistic approach is maintained and adequate progress made in each area.

## **7. An overview of existing fuel poverty and energy efficiency initiatives in North Somerset**

North Somerset's Home Energy Efficiency Officer based in the Housing Renewals Team has overall responsibility for leading the Council's affordable warmth and domestic energy efficiency agenda. As part of this role the Officer works in partnership with a variation of organisations to coordinate and disseminate information on local fuel poverty and energy conservation schemes. The following schemes quantify and briefly explain the associations with the provision of affordable warmth in North Somerset:

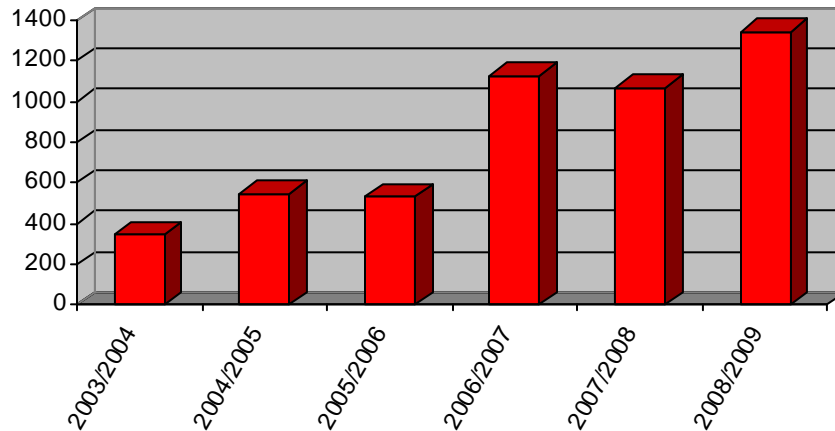
### **7.1 Warm Front**

Warm Front is a Government-funded scheme that provides grants to make homes warmer, healthier and more energy-efficient. The grant provides energy efficiency advice and a package of insulation and heating improvements tailored to each property. Warm Front Grants are for people who are on certain benefits and own their own home or rent it from a private landlord.

The following graphs show the number of households that have been improved through the Warm Front scheme in North Somerset and the cost of the measures installed.

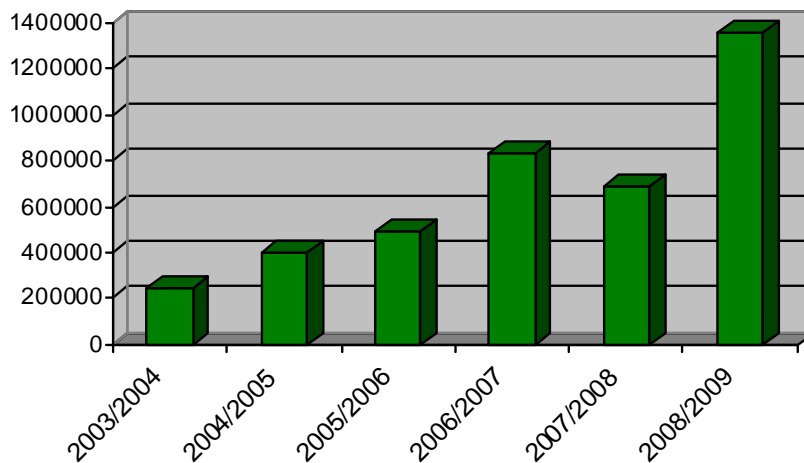
**Figure 2: Households assisted by the Warm Front grant in North Somerset**

### Warm Front - No of Households



**Figure 3: Warm Front costs in North Somerset**

### Warm Front - Costs £



## 7.3 Warm Streets

Warm Streets established in October 2008, (replacing Somerset Warm and Well) is an insulation and income maximisation scheme in partnership with seven Somerset Local Authorities, Scottish and Southern energy supplier and the Centre for Sustainable Energy. This scheme provides a single point of access to insulation schemes,

supported through energy supplier funding and offers a discounted insulation for the “able to pay” households.

#### **7.4 North Somerset Home Safety Action Form**

Produced by the Housing Renewals Team for partners to refer clients for assistance and support in their own homes. Trialled by North Somerset Care and Repair and the Partnership for Older People Project; very effective identifying low level intervention and solutions.

#### **7.5 Enforcement of minimum Housing Standard**

Housing Act 2004 introduced housing health and safety rating system to assess housing conditions (replaced fitness standard) with excess cold and damp and mould included as part of assessment.

#### **7.6 Landlord Accreditation Scheme**

The scheme, recently developed in North Somerset, is voluntary and aims to encourage acknowledge and raise the standards of rental accommodation in North Somerset, including thermal comfort. It will promote good management practice.

#### **7.7 Wessex Reinvestment Trust – Decent Home and Renewable Energy Loans**

This scheme, which is funded through North Somerset Council will provide a low interest loan facility for householders to install a renewable technology or remedy decent home standard failures, which can include boiler replacement or other essential repairs.

#### **7.8 Early Intervention and Prevention**

In line with the concordat ‘Putting People First’, North Somerset Council has invested in the agenda for Early Intervention and Prevention; to support a healthy active independent life in the community.

Following the success of the North Somerset Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPP) a number of initiatives have been sustained under the agenda for early intervention. These include:

1. Age Concern Somerset – community development work to reduce isolation and support development of community services for identified unmet needs
2. Senior Community Link – panels of older people advising on service developments and disseminating information into their communities.
3. Somerset Racial Equality Council – community development work to identify the needs of the local black and minority ethnic elder population, reduce isolation,

improve access to services and develop further community services for identified unmet need.

4. North Somerset Crossroads – flexible care support for older carers including the development of individualised budgets

In addition the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector is working more closely with the Integrated Community Health and Social Care Services to raise the profile of wider community initiatives to support people in their own homes.

Developments are also under way to improve universal access to advice and information.

### **7.9 DeFRA Community Energy Efficiency Fund (CEEF)**

Received £38,000 in 2007 via DeFRA programme to accelerate the delivery of North Somerset Affordable Warmth Action Plan. These funds targeted at area based assessments to expand activity to support additional income maximisation and funds to deliver additional targeted partnership and engagement communications.

### **7.10 North Somerset Affordable Warmth Partnership**

A partnership of local agencies in North Somerset to take forward the delivery of affordable warmth and energy efficiency at home.

### **7.11 Links to other National Indicators**

#### **Economic Well-being**

NI 116 - Proportion of children in poverty

#### **Adult health & Well-being**

NI 119 - Self reported measure of peoples health and well being  
NI 120 – All age all cause mortality rate  
NI121 – Mortality rate from all circulatory diseases at ages under 75  
NI134 – The number of emergency bed days per head of weighted population  
NI 136 – People supported to live independently through social services  
NI137 – Health life expectancy at age 65  
NI138 - Satisfaction of people over 65 with both home and neighbourhood  
NI 139 – People over 65 who say they receive the information, assistance and support needed to exercise choice and control to live independently

**Tackling exclusion and promoting equality**

NI141 – Number of people achieving independent living  
NI142 – Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living.

**Environmental sustainability**

NI186 – Per capita co2 emission in LA area  
NI 187 – Tackling fuel poverty- people receiving income based benefits  
NI 188 – Adaptation to climate change

**8. What needs to be done?**

In order to eliminate fuel poverty; 4 strategic objectives have been identified:

1. To further develop our partnership approach with relevant agencies in North Somerset to take forward the delivery of affordable warmth and energy efficiency at home.
2. To maximise energy efficiency improvements in homes across North Somerset.
3. To signpost vulnerable households to benefits and other advice to maximise household income.
4. To raise awareness of affordable warmth and ways reduce household expenditure on fuel.

**8.1 Developing partnerships**

The challenge we face in achieving this objective is the further development of the Affordable Warmth Partnership, comprising of statutory and voluntary sector agencies against an uncertain financial climate but the work in spreading information on ways to combat fuel poverty is critical to success. We also need to maintain senior strategic and political engagement with fuel poverty, and seek to attract adequate resources to deliver the action plan.

## **8.2 Maximise energy efficiency improvements to homes across North Somerset.**

A comprehensive approach to ensure existing homes are insulated to the highest standard, with modern efficient heating systems across all housing tenures is the challenge. We will meet this through continued promotion of grants and discounts and where appropriate use of enforcement powers.

## **8.3 Maximise household income**

Actively encouraging low-income households to pursue benefit entitlement and ensuring current, reliable information and advice is available is important to achieve this objective. Signposting residents struggling with excessive debt to appropriate help will be equally important.

## **8.4 Reduce household expenditure on fuel.**

Campaigning for expansion of social tariffs from energy suppliers and promotion of fuel switching information to ensure households obtain the most cost effective tariffs, will be important in achieving this objective. Improving access to technology for households to manage their fuel consumption and make appropriate adjustments will also help deliver this objective.

Affordable Warmth will be achieved through pursuing actions relating to each of the objectives however energy efficiency improvements, head the hierarchy of importance for the Council. These improvements will have long-term benefits for current and future occupants and will reduce CO2 emissions. The Council's unique position, in leading local action will enable us to maximise the potential savings for residents and the environment.

A recent Audit Commission report (Lofty Ambitions) has suggested that Council's are well placed to lead and influence local action on reducing CO2 emissions. Councils can use their influence, legal powers and resources to lead, oblige and subsidise. North Somerset Council already provide the main services, of advice and assistance recommended and we will be expanding our programme into support for renewable energy measures through an enhanced Housing Renewal Assistance Policy (2010).

The Council actively works with internal and external partners to encourage take up of home energy efficiency measures. The draft Core Strategy sets out a policy framework to address climate change that aims to deliver action across a wide spectrum of issues

including energy efficiency of buildings, promoting the use of decentralised low or zero carbon forms of renewable energy and reducing unsustainable transport use.

A detailed action plan follows with specific promotions, information and marketing plans in support of this strategy.

## 9. North Somerset Fuel Poverty & Home Energy Efficiency Strategy Action Plan

Aim	Key tasks/ activities	Lead Officer	Partners	Timescales/ Targets	Progress/ notes
<b>Key Aim 1 – Develop a partnership approach involving relevant agencies in North Somerset to take forward the delivery of affordable warmth and energy efficiency at home</b>	An Affordable Warmth steering group has been established and meets regularly to continue considering affordable warmth issues in the District. The group regularly reviews in put of partners to identify any areas of concern or gaps in membership/ representation	NSHEEO	AWSG and other relevant agencies	Meetings dates 2010: Jan 14, April 14, July 14, Oct 13. Terms of reference agreed	Meetings agreed for 2011: 26 January 11 May 14 September 14 December
	All partners to sign-up to an official mandate to agree on working to secure affordable warmth through delivery of the fuel poverty and home energy efficiency strategy	NEA	All AWSG members	Obtain signatures by March 2009	Completed & revised 2011 – Revised Commitments sent out to main core members February 2011
	Plan regular events for raising awareness of Fuel Poverty and Home Energy Efficiency	NSHEEO/ NEA	AWSG, NEA, Community Café network	Safe & Warm Events developed	Clevedon March 2009 Nailsea Oct 2009, Wsm & Portishead Nov 2009, Wsm Feb 2010, Blagdon October 2010, Portishead February 2011, Nailsea June 2011
	Maintain senior strategic and political engagement with fuel poverty, and adequate resources to deliver action	AWSG NSHEEO	NSC Leadership Team, Members, NS PCT, and other partner agencies.	Arrange Briefing sessions throughout 2010/2011	Sessions to be delivered by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2011 – Presented details of Green Deal to Carbon & Climate Change Board Jan 2011- Further Workshop organised March 2011

	Incorporate fuel poverty into NHS North Somerset health and social care strategies and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment	DPH NSHEEO	NHS North Somerset Health Improvement Specialist NSC adult and social care, early years departments	Meet with NHS health improvement specialist to instigate by mid 2010 and share info such as excess winter deaths/	Figures made available for 2005-2008. Joint strategic needs assessment will have housing section included for first time to include Fuel poverty issues
	Work with social care and health sector staff to raise awareness of Fuel poverty and cold homes	NSHEEO	NSH North Somerset. Adult social Services, Children and Young people's Services	Continue to target front-line staff with awareness raising; Make contact with Personalisation budget team for inclusion in Transforming Social Care agenda. throughout 2010	Separate list of teams briefed on fuel poverty/energy efficiency/cold homes available. Inc Rapid Response & Rehab, District nurses, Health visitors etc
	Establish a systematic and sustained approach to health and social care staff training in fuel poverty and their potential role in solutions	NSHEEO	NSH North Somerset Health Improvement Specialist	Briefing sessions to front-line children's workers, district nurses, community matrons, social workers to gain commitment from health and social care sector front-line staff to refer vulnerable householders for advice, grants, assistance etc Spring 2010	Briefing sessions delivered through out 2010 Records to be collated
	Include Warm Front and benefits information within the annual flu jab invite letter or enclosed in a separate letter in the mailing	WARM FRONT	Eaga Plc; NSH North Somerset	September annually	Annual since 2006 On Hold - Warm Front Suspended until April 2011
	Continue to liaise with fuel utilities to establish CERT funding and the implementation of other supplier/ energy efficiency schemes	NSHEEO CSE	Fuel utilities; SW ESTac	Contact made with utilities and other energy consultants & consider additional schemes.	Ongoing 2010/2011 Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) with NSHousing & Potential Green Deal being developed Autumn 2012

	<p>Liase with partners and regional bodies to identify new funding opportunities to undertake affordable warmth and climate change initiatives. Bid for funding on individual and regional basis</p>	NSHEEO	NEA; Private Sector Housing Teams, SW ESTAC; CSE; AWSG, NSC Sustainability Team, SWCAN	Attend NEA Fuel Poverty Forums and South West Carbon Action Network Forum, three times a year	CSE awarded funding through Scottish Power for 2 year Warm Families Project in N.Som
	<p>Continue close referral links with Avon Fire and Rescue, Police, Pension service, Benefits Agency and other relevant agencies</p>	NSHEEO PSHT	NSC C& R, Police, Avon Fire, AWSG	Existing referral mechanism in place. Review at each steering group meeting.	Home Safety Action Form, Reply slip and Affordable Warmth Checklist available

Aim	Key tasks/ activities	Lead Officer	Partners	Timescales/ Targets	Progress/ notes
<b>Key Aim 2 – Maximise energy efficiency improvements to all housing in North Somerset</b>	Support Warm Streets future development of specific database to capture all SAP information on houses in the district.	NSHEEO SWESTAC		April 2010 – target to link to NI187	Warm Street steering group meetings confirm funding from Scottish & Southern Electricity until March 2011- Future of scheme to be decided April 2011
	Identify dwellings that are hard to treat or non-traditional and secure potential internal & external funding to make improvements	PSHT	Private sector housing; Housing Associations/ RSLs; NS C&R, Utilities, Warm Streets	PHR – (Park Home Review)National project – 31 March 2010	Park Homes Review in progress. Sites included in national assessment project to identify potential improvements. Assessments carried out but no improvement project taken further due to lack of funding. PHR -Report being drafted for further evaluation by project board – Spring 2011
	Make contact with RSL's to promote the opportunities provided by utilities for energy efficiency improvements.	NSHEEO	RSL's, Utilities	Periodic when funding opportunities announced.	3 funding opportunities referred to RSLs during 2009. New opportunities for RSL's forwarded for their information throughout 2010 & into 2011
	Work with social housing providers to provide resources for tenants to become more energy efficient at home.	NSHEEO	RSLs, NEA	Provide information to RSL's: factsheets, room thermometer, affordable warmth checklist.	Subject to resources but direct funded by RSL's. Worked together to develop & fund a supply of 'Hot water bottle' shaped room thermometers for residents 2010/11

	Ensure an ongoing and supportive relationship with the Warm Streets Scheme	NSHEEO	AWSG; SW ESTAC; CSE, LA Partners	Steering group meets 2/3 annually.	Monitoring SWC bid and enhancing data capture.
	Continue to promote service of North Somerset Care & Repair agency, Warm Streets & Warm Front	PSHT	Private sector housing; AWSG	Attend one Advisory Group meeting annually.	NS Care & Repair Handy van service, grants & discounts heating & insulation. Loft Clearance scheme developed for vulnerable households, administered through NSCR
	Maintain an awareness of issues around energy performance certificates. Keep up to date with changes	NSHEEO	Private Sector Housing; private rented sector housing;	Look at delivering a 'whole house' package to include energy survey, EPC (SAP rating) recommendations & referral to insulation & heating schemes 2010/11	In line with future Government requirements (The Green Deal) to deal with energy efficiency in existing housing stock.
	NSC staff undertaking HHSRS assessments to raise awareness of the risk factors of cold homes and available assistance	PSHT	Private Sector Housing Teams	Actively identify and refer households to appropriate schemes to improve thermal comfort. Especially target homes with SAP rating of less than 35.	PR & HRT aware of schemes available and will actively refer households in need of improvement.
	Use Private Sector Housing Forum to promote, Landlords Energy Saving Allowance (LESA), Green Tax Credits, the HHSRS and the energy performance certificate of the HIP	NSHEEO	Private Sector Housing Forum; AWSG; WDGB	Give presentations/briefings on topical/relevant issues. Attend one meeting in 2010.	HE attended meetings and gave updates.

	Enhance and develop current incentives to encourage landlords to carry out energy efficiency improvements	NSHEEO	Private rented sector housing; Accreditation Officer, WDGB; Private Sector Housing Forum, Utility,	Meet with Accreditation officer and utility company and other local LA's to discuss.	Met Oct 09. Utility (Scottish & Southern) Putting incentive package together. Small electrical appliance 'bundle' available at discounted prices for landlords & tenants. The Green Deal will introduce requirements for Landlords to make properties energy efficient
	Raise awareness of the importance of affordable warmth & home energy efficiency in the Climate change agenda, gain commitment for NSC officers to work together, to integrate improvement programmes.	NSHEEO	NSC Sustainability Group	Regularly meet and develop through newly formed Sustainability Group includes officers from transport, waste, and planning.	Meetings commenced Oct 09. Scottish & Southern biomass funding forwarded to Planning. Monitor Group with PHSM. HEEO member of Carbon Management & Climate Change project board
	Investigate funding for renewable/ sustainable technology installation projects	NSHEEO	Wessex Re-investment Trust, SWESTAC, Utilities, GOSW, Sustainability Group	£275,000 included in SWC bid 2010/11	Home Energy & Renewable Energy Assistance developed. April 2010-Dec 2010
	Research into new or innovative forms of insulation and promote findings to householders	NSHEEO		Ongoing	Solid wall internal/ external insulation/ housing with cavities too small to fill with conventional materials, Park Homes

	<p>Work with Eco- schools project provide support to programme and development, by promoting home energy efficiency to pupils to help change behaviour at home.</p>	<p>HEEO,</p>	<p>Eco schools project cancelled due to funding issues. Picked up with NSC Sustainability Carbon Management, &amp; Waste Minimisation Officers.</p>	<p>New project set up by CSE with funding from Scottish Power called Warm Families. Specifically to target families in North Somerset who are in Fuel Poverty,</p>	<p>Workshops and information offered to schools for Summer 2011-03-03</p>
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Aim	Key tasks/ activities	Lead Officer	Partners	Timescales/ Targets	Progress/ notes
<b>Key Aim 3 – Signpost vulnerable households to benefits and other advice to maximise income</b>	Work with DWP/ North Somerset's benefits team to target low income households unable to access benefits/ grants	NSHEEO	AWSG in contact with vulnerable householders	DWP officer will attend meetings as and when possible, but will make sure that other members of group have access to upto date information	New Referral form specifically for referrals to DWP circulated to group, must only be referred if last resort. I.e. not able to phone themselves or have a family member to assist.
	Monitor referral mechanisms to Warm Streets and Eaga plc.	NSHEEO	Liberata NS benefits teams; DWP; SW ESTAC; Eaga plc.	Discuss at regular update meetings of Warm Streets steering group.	All members of group to refer to each other
	Develop a 'benefit entitlement' awareness raising session or training pack for Parish Councils and Elected Members	NSHEEO	DWP/ Pension Service; Liberata; Eaga plc	surgeries - throughout 2010/11	Deliver briefing sessions to Councillors, hold regular advice sessions at Parish council & local Councillor surgeries
	Use North Somerset Life, newspaper/leaflets/ other media on how householders can save money on bills	NSHEEO	AWSG; all partners with media connections	Periodic 2/3 annually	Regular articles placed throughout 2010/11 in NS Life
	Work with fuel suppliers and charities to improve take up of the Priority Services Register and other services	NSHEEO	AWSG all partners	Promote PSR via all partner agencies; info available from Consumer Direct/ Focus; promote on Council Gateway Project once established; ongoing	All members of the group to be mindful of service that is on offer to certain customers through the Priority Service Register (PSR) and to refer where appropriate
	Regularly review payment methods for different personal circumstances, investigate the benefits of social tariffs and support national campaigns to drive the cost of energy down.	NSHEEO	AWSG; NEA; Consumer Direct/ Focus; fuel utilities	On going	NEA, BDAC provides information on new tariffs

	Identify organisations providing debt advice/financial initiatives, promote to householders	NSHEEO	BDAC; Liberata; Care Connect; Money Advice Centre	Ongoing	Discuss updates at AWSG meeting. Briefing sessions to organisations not in AWSG
	Encourage organisations and individuals to apply to relevant trust funds to deal with fuel debt	NSHEEO/ BDAC		Ongoing	Individuals and families in need receive assistance to meet arrears of energy charges
	Promote Fuel Direct as a debt management tool and ensure clients check meter readings regularly	NSHEEO/	BDAC, ASWSG NS CAB; Disability and Carers Service;	Fuel Direct - those in receipt of income support can pay utilities for fuel and repay arrears via direct deductions from Department of Social Services benefit	Referral mechanism in place through AWSG to refer for assistance.  r

Aim	Key tasks/ activities	Lead Officer	Partners	Timescales/ Targets	Progress/ notes
<b>Key Aim 4 – Raise awareness of affordable warmth and how to reduce expenditure on fuel</b>	Review awareness raising briefing/training programme for key internal staff, external groups and organisations to refer to advice services	NSHEEO/)	NEA, AWSG	2/3 annually. Periodic update	New briefing information to reflect the general Housing Service implemented January 2011
	Ensure specific partner agencies understand referral process to members of AWSG	NSHEEO	NEA, AWSG	N/A	All have access to new DWP referral form and standard referral form Avon Fire & Rescue
	Continue to work with Eaga plc to promote Warm Front initiatives to local householders via leaflets, roadshows and Liaison Officers	NSHEEO.	AWSG, Eaga plc.	2010 programme TBC.	Warm Front programme suspended from Dec 2010
	Work with CSE to promote energy efficiency discount schemes (Warm Streets) including the fuel utilities' CERT and the PSR	NSHEEO	SW ESTAC; fuel utilities; AWSG, CSE	Promote at events,(displays & literature)talks to communities groups	Specified targeting and mail outs included in CSE annual publicity plan. New round of marketing carried out February 2011
	Ensure appropriate information is disseminated by agencies working with vulnerable households	NSHEEO	AWSG	Incorporate into partners' newsletters – discuss content at AWSG meetings	Factsheets, Room thermometer, affordable warmth checklist produced for all members of AWSG to use, throughout 2010/11.
	Ensure advice available to private rented tenants of how they can work with landlords to improve energy efficiency	NSHEEO	Private Sector Housing Forum; private rented team,	Review advice for tenants – online and/or leaflets by Oct 2010.	Housing Web site updated 2010
	Provide simple affordable warmth information & energy efficiency (consider different formats and languages)	NSHEEO	Translation services; NEA; fuel utilities; AWSG; SW ESTAC; early years, adult and social care POPP/ SREC; The Children's Society		Factsheets/website information to be updated routinely Translation would be available on request

	Promote energy efficiency facilities for the hard of hearing, visually impaired and the talking books scheme.	NSHEEO	Vision North Somerset Age Concern; Care Connect; libraries; information services; agencies supporting carers; care providers	Provide articles to partner agencies regularly and ensure representation at some AWG meetings	NEA has a DVD for those that are hard of hearing (Meeting the Energy Needs of the Deaf, MEND) Article provided for Woodspring talking news Make contact with Social worker for the deaf Tel 882140.
	Promote information at GP surgeries, local pharmacies, NSC receptions, Libraries etc	NSHEEO	NSH North Somerset	Support national campaigns: Warm Homes Week, Energy Saving Week, by providing specific display & information	Life Channel Film 'Keeping Warm & Well' due to be shown in 22 GP surgeries across district. Winter 2009/10- Display material requested to Riverside Surgery – St Georges Jan 2011
	Continue promotion of affordable warmth and energy efficiency to the BME population, through attendance at Your North Somerset and similar local events.	NSHEEO	SREC	In regular contact with SREC community group, invitations to give talks and attend meetings	January 2010 event booked to attend. Briefing session given, Badger Centre Jan 2011. Your North Somerset event attended January 2011. SREC representative attended Safe & Warm Event February 2011

## 10 **ACRONYMS**

A&SPolice – Avon and Somerset Police  
AWSG - Affordable Warmth Steering Group  
Avon F&RS – Avon Fire and Rescue Service  
BDAC - Bristol Debt Advice Centre  
BRE – Building Research Establishment  
CSE – Centre for Sustainable Energy  
DPH – Director of Public Health  
DWP – Department of Work and Pensions  
EPC – Energy Performance Certificates  
GOSW – Government Office for the South West  
HHSRS – Housing Health and Safety Rating System  
NEA – National Energy Action  
NS C&R – North Somerset Care and Repair  
NS CAB – North Somerset Citizens' Advice Bureau  
NSH – North Somerset Housing  
NS LEA – North Somerset Local Education Authority  
NSP – North Somerset Partnership  
NSHEEO – North Somerset Home Energy Efficiency Officer  
NHS North Somerset – National Health Service North Somerset  
PSHF – Private Sector Housing Forum  
PSHT – Private Sector Housing Teams  
PSR – Priority Services Register  
SREC – Somerset Racial Equality Council  
SW ESTac – South West Energy Saving Trust advice centre (Administer Somerset Warm Streets)  
SW RDA – South West Regional Development Agency  
SW RHB – South West Regional Housing Body  
WDGB - Woodspring District Guarantee Board WDGB

Appendix A: North Somerset Affordable Warmth Steering Group partners



Latest version: March 2011