



**Adults & Community
Directorate**

Draft

***Affordable Warmth Strategy
2011 to 2015***

April 2011

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Halton's Affordable Warmth Strategy 2011 – 2013. The Strategy sets out how the Council and its partners aim to increase affordable warmth and reduce the incidence of fuel poverty in the Borough.

Fuel poverty has become an increasing concern in recent years not just for some of the residents of Halton but also for many thousands of other people across the United Kingdom. With the dramatic rise in fuel costs over the last few years energy bills have increased significantly and so it is not just people on income benefits that are likely to have experienced fuel poverty. Every year in winter in the UK many people die as a result of the effects of excess cold. These statistics are affected by the weather and with the much colder and prolonged weather we have experienced for the last two winters it is highly likely that the mortality statistics for seasonal excess death will reflect this.

Halton Borough Council already undertakes a number of activities designed to reduce fuel poverty. For example, since 1999/2000 it has worked in partnership with Energy Projects Plus and the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre to offer home insulation measures and heating improvements funded under various sources e.g. direct Council funding, Government Warm Front scheme and funding from Utilities Companies to help make homes more affordably warm. Other partners also have a role to play in raising awareness of fuel poverty, promoting energy efficiency and maximising household income. Further details of the work being undertaken is provided in section 5 of this Strategy.

The Affordable Warmth Strategy aims to pull together all that is currently being done by all sections of the Council and other agencies to ensure a consistent and coordinated approach and maximise the impact for households in fuel poverty. The Strategy will also help provide a strategic focus on the issue and identify opportunities for further joint working.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who participated in the development of the Strategy, which I now commend to you.

Councillor Ann Gerard
Portfolio Holder, Health and Adults

1. INTRODUCTION

Fuel poverty is a problem which affects almost 600,000 households in the North West, and the problem has become worse in recent years as domestic fuel prices have risen. Households in fuel poverty, many of which are vulnerable, are unable to heat their homes in order to maintain comfort and health. Living in cold homes means an increased risk of cold related illnesses.

Vulnerable households may be eligible for grant aid for heating and insulation, and they may also need advice on benefits and energy efficiency. Halton Borough Council has, since 2000, directed significant grant funding toward improving the energy efficiency of private sector housing. In addition, in 2005, taking account of the health inequalities prevalent in the borough, run a health focused programme HEARTH, which installs adequate heating in homes occupied by people with heart and respiratory problems. Complementing the HEARTH programme, npower Health Through Warmth (HtW) operates in the borough as part of the Merseyside HtW programme.

Tackling fuel poverty and promoting energy efficiency is best achieved by the co-operation of a range of local partners. Halton Borough Council has good links with the support agencies that operate in the borough, and the NHS. Therefore, together with these local agencies and support from NEA and Energy Projects Plus have developed this Affordable Warmth Strategy along with multi agency consultation.

The development of this strategy is seen as an important part of developing a strong lead on reducing fuel poverty and related health issues by developing a framework for action and a network of organisations committed to tackling the issues.

2. AFFORDABLE WARMTH AND FUEL POVERTY – CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND SOLUTIONS

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income on all domestic fuel use in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime¹. The number of households in fuel poverty has increased since 2008 largely due to increases in domestic fuel prices. Some homes will be hard to treat, in that they may not be suitable for traditional and cost effective insulation techniques. Households may not have access to the cheapest fuels. The most vulnerable households are often the most difficult to reach, so the challenge is to put into place mechanisms to access the fuel poor, and provide the most appropriate service which will make their homes affordable to heat. The provision of affordable warmth means that households will not be living in fuel poverty.

2.1 FUEL POVERTY STATISTICS

Numbers in Fuel Poverty

In the North West **594,000** households were living in fuel poverty in 2009, this figure represents around 22% of households and has risen over three fold since 2003².

Fuel Poverty	No. of fuel poor h/holds in NW 2003	% of fuel poor h/holds in NW 2003	No. of fuel poor h/holds in NW 2009	% of fuel poor h/holds in NW 2009
	178,000	6.3%	594,000	21.9%

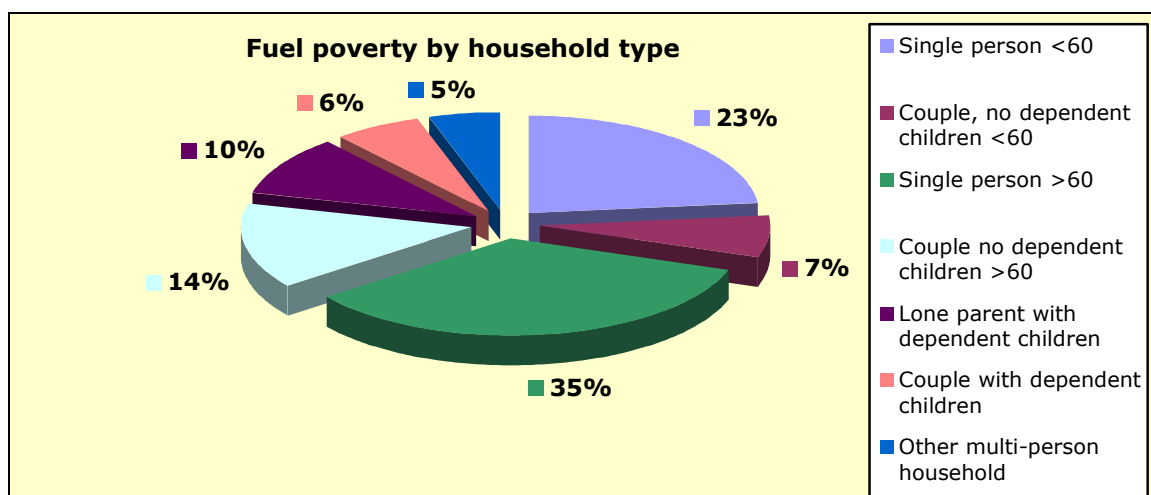
Fuel Poverty by Household Type

The greater proportion of fuel poor vulnerable households in England are over 60 years of age. In addition single people under 60 yrs and households with children are also disproportionately represented in the figures³

¹ UK Fuel Poverty Strategy (2001) – For target setting the Government includes Housing Benefit and Income Support for Mortgage Interest.

² NEA 2010

³ NEA 2008



Fuel Poverty in Halton

There are an estimated 4,900⁴ (12.2%) households in fuel poverty in Halton compared to approximately 13.2% based on the findings of the EHCS 2007, as reported in the Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2009, published by the Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC). A lower proportion than the national average, the 4,900 dwellings still represent a substantial number of households that are in fuel poverty and will present issues in terms of both energy efficiency and occupier health. The highest rate of fuel poverty is found in the privately rented sector where 26.0% are in fuel poverty, compared with 10.0% in the owner occupied sector.

By the very nature of fuel poverty, it is almost always associated with those residents on the lowest incomes. 4,200 households (86.0% of the households in fuel poverty) were households with incomes below £10,000 per annum, with the remaining 700 (14.0%) having incomes above £10,000 per annum. This means that the rate of fuel poverty in households with income below £10,000 is 53.0%. Fuel poverty is likely to be associated with dwellings where one or more residents are in receipt of a means tested benefit as such benefits are indicative of low income. Of the 4,900 households in fuel poverty in Halton, 2,800 households (57.0% of households in fuel poverty) receive a benefit, compared with 2,100 (43%) where occupiers do not receive benefit. The 2,800 fuel poor households in receipt of a benefit therefore represent 18.0% of the overall 15,300 benefit recipients.

2.2 CAUSES OF FUEL POVERTY

Fuel poverty is caused by the combined effects of

- energy inefficient housing,
- low incomes

⁴ Halton Borough Council. Private Sector House Condition Survey 2009

- high costs for domestic fuel
- under occupancy of homes

Recent increases in fuel costs, other household expenses and the credit crunch are inevitably impacting on fuel poverty levels. Many households contain individuals who may require extra warmth as a result of age or disability.

2.2.1 Energy and Housing

Tenure

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy and subsequent progress reports note that fuel poverty is an issue that predominantly affects households in the private sector including owner occupiers and those in private rented accommodation. Compared to the national average, there is a higher proportion of public sector housing in Halton.

Tenure	Halton Dwellings	Halton Percent	EHCS 2006
Owner occupied	34,600	65%	70%
Privately Rented	5,600	10%	12%
Private Sector Stock	40,200	75%	82%
Housing Association (RSL)	13,700	25%	8%
Local Authority	0	0%	10%
Social Housing	13,700	25%	18%
All Tenures	53,900	100%	100%

Source: 2009 House Condition Survey & EHCS 2006

Halton Borough Council conducted a **Private Sector House Condition Survey in 2009** which considered a range of indicators relevant to fuel poverty and affordable warmth. The results are very useful in the targeting of action in term of housing and household characteristics. Some of the key findings are outlined below.

Energy Efficiency

The energy efficiency of homes is measured by SAP (on a scale of 1-100, the higher the number the better). The average in **England** was 49 in 2006. Social housing is, on average, more energy efficient than private sector housing. It is interesting to look at these figures in comparison with the SAP 65 which has been deemed as an appropriate level to keep households out of fuel poverty.

	Average SAP* England 2006	Average SAP Halton 2009
All Tenures	49	
Of which owner occupied	47	57
Of which private rented	47	53
Of which local authority rented	56	N/A
Of which registered social landlord rented	59	65 (2008 figures – due to programmes of work 2009 figure is likely to be higher)
*Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP 2005 methodology) Source: Housing and planning key facts CLG May 2008		

Decent Homes

It is Government policy that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a “decent home”. The Decent Homes Standard contains four broad criteria that a property should:

- A - be above the legal minimum standard for housing, and
- B - be in a reasonable state of repair, and
- C - have reasonably modern facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms) and services, and
- D - provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (effective insulation and efficient heating).

The English House Condition Survey Annual Report 2006 notes that of the 22m households in England, 7.7m were non decent., Social housing was more likely to be decent than other tenures and also performed better on energy efficiency and CO₂ emissions. In England 35% of owner occupied and 47% of private-rented dwellings are non decent whereas in Halton the figures are more favourable at 25% of owner occupied dwellings and 34% of private rented dwellings being non decent. In both cases the most common reason for non decency is lack of thermal comfort. The house types most in Halton likely to lack thermal comfort are small terraced houses, and houses built before 1919.

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is intended to be a replacement for the fitness standard and is a prescribed method of assessing individual hazards, rather than a conventional standard to give a judgment of fit or unfit. The HHSRS is evidence based – national statistics on the health impacts of hazards encountered in the home are used as a basis for assessing individual hazards.

The modelling of excess cold hazards is based on the use of the individual energy efficiency (SAP) rating for each dwelling, which is scaled to give a hazard score. Where a dwelling has a SAP rating of less than 35, this produces a category 1 hazard score. The overall proportion of dwellings with a Category 1 Hazard is 10.9% (compared with 23.5% found in the EHCS 2006). This represents 4,400 dwellings across Halton, with 3,900 being houses and an estimated 500 flats. The proportion of Category 1 Hazards attributable to excess cold is the highest by a significant margin. 66.5% of all Category 1 Hazards were due to excess cold.

Incomes

The lower a household's income, the higher a proportion they will need to spend on essentials such as fuel and food. Recent increases in unemployment are likely to increase the incidence of fuel poverty in households who were previously able to afford their fuel bills.

The 2009 Halton Private Sector House Condition Survey indicates that there is a higher proportion than the national average of households with an income of less than £15,000 (33.6% compared with 26%). For the remaining income bands, with the exception of the £30,000 to £39,999 income band which has a slightly higher level, the proportions are lower, markedly so in the case of incomes above £50,000.⁵

Unclaimed Benefits (2006/07)

In Great Britain in 2006/07 approximately between £6 billion and £10 billion went unclaimed in benefits. Of this between £2 billion and £3 billion was unclaimed Pension Credit alone.⁶ In addition to the obvious benefit of increasing a household's income, many welfare benefits also act as eligibility criteria for domestic energy grants.

Financial Inclusion

Financial inclusion is about ensuring everyone has the capability and opportunity to access the financial services and products needed to participate fully in modern day society. These include: access to affordable and responsible credit, access to an appropriate bank account, access to face-to-face debt advice, access to basic home contents insurance, access to savings.⁷

People are financially excluded when they do not have access to basic financial services and products, including paying more for fuel due to lack of access to discounts available for Direct Debit and other automated payment methods. This has the potential to lead to issues of fuel poverty.

Fuel Prices

Increasing fuel prices have been the main reason for increases in fuel poverty since 2003. The table below demonstrates that in Jan 2010 there had been a 114% increase (£653) since January 2003 (UK Fuel Poverty 7th Annual report 2008, updated by NEA in January 2010)

Average Dual Fuel Bill		
Jan 2003	Jan 2008	Jan 2010
£572	£922	£1225

- Domestic oil (and LPG) markets remain unregulated unlike the electricity and mains gas markets
- Providing alternative energy sources is an area of development, but such sources will need to be both economically viable (included in grant schemes) and of benefit for low-income vulnerable households in fuel poverty.

2.2 CONSEQUENCES OF FUEL POVERTY

⁵ Private sector house condition survey Halton BC 2009

⁶ Department for Work and Pensions, Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-Up in 2006-07. Benefits included are Income Support, Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance (Income-Based)

⁷ Rural Money Matters: A support guide to rural financial inclusion-Council for Rural Communities July 2009

Health risks from cold homes

Living in fuel poverty has impacts on health. In many cases households may be forced to choose between expenditure on fuel, other essential items such as fuel and / or debt repayments. Faced with such stark choices many households may put themselves at increased risk of cold-related illness.

It has been established that indoor temperatures have an effect on health (ref)

- 18-24 °C, no risk to sedentary, healthy people
- Below 16 °C, diminished resistance to respiratory infections
- Below 12 °C, increased blood pressure and viscosity
- Below 9 °C, after 2 or more hours, deep body temperature falls

Cold conditions also lower resistance to respiratory infections and exacerbates asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD). Allergens associated with mould growth in damp homes also affect respiratory conditions. A person's mobility and dexterity reduce when they are cold increasing risk of falls and injury as well as affecting arthritis. Much of this illness is both largely predictable and preventable and would save the NHS millions each year in treatment costs.

Poor housing conditions in general increase the risk of severe ill-health or disability by up to 25 per cent during childhood and early adulthood . People with asthma are twice as likely to be living in damp homes . One in 12 children in Britain are more likely to develop diseases such as bronchitis, TB, or asthma, because of bad housing"⁸ Making homes affordably warm can improve indoor temperatures and reduce the incidence of mould growth so will assist in health improvement.

There is growing body of research suggests a causal link between older, poorly insulated, poorly heated housing and poverty to low indoor temperatures and cold-related deaths⁹. This would suggest that there are likely to be improvements in health of individuals provided with measures aimed at improving the thermal efficiency of homes and the affordability of heating them.

Providing affordable warmth for households reduces inequalities in health and may improve life expectancy; it improves the mental health and well being of households; improves educational attainment and school attendance; can reduce childhood asthma; promotes independent living and whole house use; and potentially reduces/ delays admission to hospital and other care facilities. Improving homes and household incomes may also promote social inclusion within communities.

Benefit to health sector of reducing 'Excess Cold' hazard

Excess cold has the highest Category 1 Hazard rate both within Halton and at the national level (EHCS 2006). Comparing the costs of treatment to the NHS (£2,165,800) against that of energy efficiency measures to alleviate the problem (£629,118), it can be seen that, with a

⁸ Chance of a lifetime: The impact of bad housing on children's lives Shelter 2006

⁹ For example, Cold comfort - The social and environmental determinants of excess winter deaths in England, 1986-96; Dr P Wilkinson; Joseph Rowntree Foundation; 2001

payback of only 0.3 years, the remedial works are a cost effective way of reducing some of the financial burden on the NHS. The high cost to the NHS results from the high likelihood of an extreme outcome for excess cold hazards. This is due to the fact that the most vulnerable group (the elderly) are very likely to suffer health problems, resulting in a hospital stay, if they are exposed to cold conditions in their home for prolonged periods. (From Halton PS House Condition Survey 2009)

Excess Winter Deaths

Excess winter deaths are those deaths which occur in the winter quarter, compared to the rest of the year. In 2008/09 there were 5000 excess winter deaths in the North West. This represented a 49% increase on the previous winter, when the number was 3400. This increase was also apparent nationally, it is assumed due to the severity of the winter. The key diseases that cause an excess of deaths during the winter period are cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. Cardiovascular deaths occur on average, two days after a cold spell, deaths from respiratory disease occur on average 12 days after a cold spell. In 2007-8 in Halton there were 80 excess winter deaths.

Fuel Debt

If a household cannot afford the fuel they need to keep warm but, because of the age or health of household occupants, they do use their fuel, they are likely to fall into debt. Nationally, in 2008, 6.8m households (26%) were in debt to fuel suppliers with an average debt of almost £114 each¹⁰.

2.3 SOLUTIONS - AFFORDABLE WARMTH

The solution to fuel poverty is to provide households with affordable warmth. The National Indicator NI187 as the indicator for fuel poverty uses the improvement of energy efficiency of homes of households on benefit as the indicator for households taken out of fuel poverty. However there are other causal aspects of fuel poverty, so action is required on a number of fronts:

- improving the energy efficiency of homes, heating systems and appliances,
- maximising household incomes,
- providing access to cheaper fuel and tariff options, and possibly alternative sources of energy ,
- the provision of energy advice to encourage changes in behaviour

The action plan in this strategy propose activities in all those areas

¹⁰ uSwitch, April 2008

3. NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE - FUEL POVERTY POLICY DRIVERS

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy¹¹ (2001) committed the Government to the eradication of fuel poverty by 2016 'as far as reasonably practicable'. An interim target was adopted to end fuel poverty for all vulnerable households by 2010 although the Government latterly conceded that the target would not be achieved. Latest developments can be found on NEA's website www.nea.org.uk

The Government's main tools for ending fuel poverty

Warm Front

The Government - funded Warm Front grant offers a package of heating and insulation measures to eligible households in private sector housing on income related benefits, up to the value of £3500, or £6000 for households relying on oil heating. Warm Front also provides a Benefit Health Check to applicants. The operation of the scheme is being reviewed in spring 2011 but is set to continue until 2013. The coalition Government aims to replace Warm Front with a new Green Deal which will allow private firms to offer energy efficiency improvements at no upfront cost to the consumer, with costs recouped later as the consumer benefits through savings on energy bills. It is not clear what impact this will have on delivery on the Strategy.

Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT)

The Carbon Emissions Reduction target (CERT) 2008-11 is the government's main policy reducing carbon emissions from the domestic sector. Under CERT the major gas and electricity suppliers are set a carbon emissions reduction target. Energy efficiency schemes provide insulation measures but not heating. The suppliers may also provide energy advice as part of their programme. A specific percentage of the customers for the schemes (currently 40%) must be priority customers ie on qualifying benefits. In 2012 CERT is to be replaced by the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) which will focus on the poorest and most vulnerable people and on hard to treat homes.

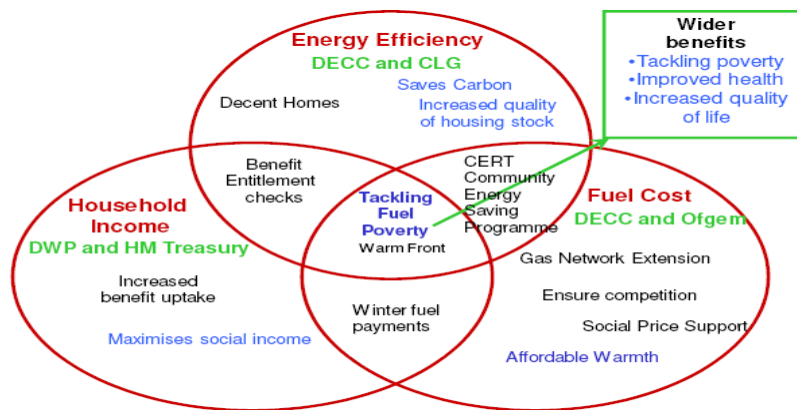
Decent Homes Standard

The Decent Homes Standard has been quoted by Government as helping towards fuel poverty reduction targets although the Thermal Comfort standards set within it are low. However the **Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS)** gives greater emphasis to excess cold within homes.

Winter Fuel Payments

Winter Fuel Payments are paid by government to help older people to keep warm in winter. Households over 60 receive £250 and those over 80 receive £400. The diagram below is used by the Department for Energy and Climate Change and illustrates the cross cutting nature of fuel poverty and the integrating Government programmes to reduce fuel poverty

¹¹ UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, 2001 – see <http://www.berr.gov.uk/whatwedo/energy/fuel-poverty/strategy/index.html>



4. THE HALTON PERSPECTIVE - LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES

Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2011-2026

Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy sets out the priorities for Halton's Local Strategic Partnership for the 15 year period 2011 to 2026. The provision of affordable warmth can make a significant contribution to each of the five priorities as described below:

A Healthy Halton – Provision of affordable warmth will help to reduce health inequalities and promote the independence of older people and vulnerable groups. In doing so it will help meet the SCS objective to remove barriers that contribute to poor health.

Employment, learning and skills – Increasing household income and promoting the availability of support are key elements to improving affordable warmth and will contribute to the SCS objective to maximise an individual's potential to increase and manage their income, including access to appropriate, supportive advice services.

A Safer Halton – The provision of upgraded heating systems through Warm Front grants or as part of programmed improvements will help to reduce the number of preventable fires in the Borough.

Children and Young People in Halton – The provision of affordable warmth will make a dual contribution to the well being of children in Halton through reducing the number of children living in poverty and helping to improve their physical and emotional health.

Environment and Regeneration in Halton – The provision of affordable warmth will have a significant contribution to Halton's environment through reduction of CO2 emissions, thereby helping to tackle climate change and the provision of good quality residential accommodation.

Halton Housing Strategy 2008-2011

The Affordable Warmth Strategy can make a significant contribution to meeting some of the objectives contained in Halton's existing Housing Strategy as detailed below.

- Achieve a year on year reduction in the proportion of non decent private sector homes occupied by vulnerable households.
- Improve conditions in the private rented sector.
- Increase the number of people on income based benefits who live in energy efficient homes.
- Ensure all social housing stock in the Borough meets the Decent Homes Standard.

Child and Family Poverty Strategy

There is a link between affordable warmth, decent homes and child and family poverty, as poorer families are more likely to struggle to adequately heat their homes. 26.4%¹² of children in Halton live in Poverty and we are seeking to address this through the Halton Child and Family Poverty Strategy. In addition this Strategy directly helps to alleviate poverty by improving housing standards through support to ensure that homes are adequately insulated and have efficient heating systems, and by supporting people to claim benefits that they are entitled to reduce the financial burden of heating homes.

5. LOCAL ACTION – INITIATIVES AND SCHEMES

Halton Council has worked with a range of partners since 1995 to meet its statutory obligations under the Home Energy Conservation Act, reduce fuel poverty, and improve the health and wellbeing of residents. Projects have provided heating and insulation by securing funding from central government, utilities, Halton Council budgets and other sources. Through its local Energy Zone and HEARTH schemes linked into the national Warm Front programme in the 5 years up to 2009, alone over 6,500 homes have been improved with a spend of over £5.5m.

Energy Zone

Halton Borough Council's Energy Zone scheme, managed by Energy Projects Plus, provides grants to all home owners and privately renting households in Halton. This scheme was initially set up in 2000 with the aid of Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) funding but was later mainstreamed and is now available borough wide. It brings the cost of insulation down significantly to £49 per measure (loft or cavity wall, £98 for both) and could be free to residents who are over the age of 70 or in receipt of certain benefits. In 2009-10 Energy Zone helped over 500 households get insulation installed.

HEARTH (Health and Energy Action for Residents in Their Homes)

Responding to identified health inequalities within Halton, HEARTH commenced in 2001, funded initially by HECAction, and has since been mainstreamed into Halton Council's Health and Community Directorate programmes. It provides **funding towards new or replacement heating systems in homes occupied by residents with heart or respiratory conditions.** It will also contribute to Warmfront excess charges for eligible residents. HEARTH complements Health Through Warmth also providing training to frontline staff and promotional activities across the Borough. More recently, a programme of targeted home visits by social

¹² Halton's Child and Family Poverty Needs Assessment <http://cid-9104d6a5e629b08f.office.live.com/self.aspx/ChildPoverty/CPFNeedsAssessment.pdf>

care staff to residents aged over 80 has led to over 100 referrals of highly vulnerable residents into the scheme.

Health Through Warmth

The Health Through Warmth (HTW) scheme was set up by npower in 2000 in partnership with the NHS and National Energy Action (NEA). HTW operates through a locally based referral partnership which seeks to help vulnerable people whose health is adversely affected by cold, damp living conditions. This is achieved by facilitating the installation of appropriate energy efficiency and heating measures, along with the provision of related advice and information.

Clients are referred by health and other key community workers who have attended locally based awareness sessions offered by HTW. HTW Merseyside, delivered by Energy Projects Plus, commenced in late 2003 and to date has received over 4,800 referrals and secured over £4m in third party funding in addition to over £0.5m from npower's crisis fund. Key partners are health sector, local authority, and community support frontline staff who attend an awareness session and refer into the HTW scheme. Over 1,000 frontline staff have attended awareness sessions, though not all have made referrals into the referral system.

HTW operates across the local authority areas of Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton and Wirral and works closely with other schemes that operate in these areas such as Halton's "HEARTH", Sefton's "SEARCH", and Wirral's "Cosy Homes".

Income maximization / Benefit Take up campaigns

The Welfare Rights Service

The Welfare Rights Service of Halton Borough Council provides a holistic welfare benefits and debt advice service. The team will assist with activities from basic form completion to appeal representation and complex casework. The service is provided through telephone advice, booked appointments, "drop in" and home visits are undertaken for the housebound. There is additionally a specialist Macmillan Cancer Support advice officer. Income maximisation is undertaken and where appropriate clients are signposted to agencies specialising in delivering affordable warmth services". The Welfare Rights team brought in £2 million in unclaimed benefits.

Registered Social Landlords

Halton Housing Trust employs a full time Welfare Benefits Support Officer and Financial Inclusion Officer. The Financial Inclusion team in **Riverside** is comprised of a manager and two officers. One of these officers is the Strategic Affordable Warmth Officer. In each division, this financial inclusion work is usually delivered/ supported by Community Engagement staff. There have recently been recruited, two full time Affordable Warmth Delivery Officers for the Mersey North and Mersey South (Where Halton sits) Divisions. In **Plus Dane** The Asset Management Team comprises 7 members of staff who deliver a range of planned programmes that target affordable warmth and fuel poverty issues annually.

Sure Start to Later Life

Sure Start visits clients in their homes and carry out very thorough assessments, covering most aspects of a person's life. This includes health & wellbeing, social & emotional, practical,

travel & transport, finances, living independently, housing & heating etc. Part of the assessment looks at finances in general, and if it is felt that the client is not getting what they are entitled to, the person is encouraged to allow Sure Start to contact the relevant agency to deal with it. When successful, this will result in the person's income being maximised, allowing them to have Sure Start visit increased finances and freedom. Questions are asked about heating and warmth in the home, and many older people are conscious of heating costs and may be reluctant to turn it on when needed, preferring to wrap up in the winter using extra clothing, or blankets, or to only heat one room. Also many older people have paid to have their system improved or updated, usually because they were unaware of any schemes available, or if they did know that they thought they would not qualify, so lack of knowledge is an issue. When a person is found in a cold home, staff attempt to make a referral to outside agencies like Warm Front, Energy Zone etc. Sometimes this is accepted by the individuals who have heating and insulation installed but other times it is not, as people state that they couldn't deal with the upheaval of having their system replaced so choose to go on with little or no heating.

Age Concern

Age Concern Mid Mersey is doing everything it can to help tackle health, heating & loneliness issues for older people.

Advice is available in the form of a "Help with heating costs" fact sheet and an Age UK "Winter wrapped up" booklet that includes a thermometer.

In addition Age Concern ensures that the elderly are fully aware of what grants are available to them through the "Warm Front" and "Health through Warmth" schemes. Between April – October 2010 Age Concern Mid Mersey brought in £98,220 in unclaimed benefits.

6. HOW THE STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

The Affordable Warmth Strategy is a cross cutting strategy and as such cannot be developed by one agency alone. For this reason the development of this strategy included a variety of organisations and council departments, and was facilitated by NEA (National Energy Action) supported by Energy Projects Plus. The first stage of the process was to set up a steering group which would oversee the consultation process and the production of the strategy document.

Two consultation workshops were held to develop the strategy. (See Appendix 1 for list of delegates). The workshops provided an opportunity for partners to consider the problem of fuel poverty in particular how it affects the residents of Halton, and produce the key aims and objectives and an action plan for the delivery of the strategy. Finally local partners provided the background information to produce this document.

7. KEY THEMES FOR THE STRATEGY - ACTION PLANS

Key Aim 1: Raise awareness and understanding of fuel poverty					
Outcome	Tasks	Lead agency	Key partners	Outputs	Timescale
1.1 Key agencies understand fuel poverty, its causes, impacts and solutions	1.1.1 Identify HBC representative to co-ordinate and drive Affordable Warmth Strategy and Action Plan	AW Steering group	HBC	Strategic lead identified	Completed
	1.1.2 Include fuel poverty on the agenda of key directorates and agencies, and ensure it remains on agenda e.g. through Policy briefings etc	HBC coordinator	All agencies, Councillors	Fuel poverty on agenda of key depts and agencies	Immediate and ongoing
	1.1.3 Contribute to events for all key directorates and agencies, and email news on quarterly basis	HBC Coordinator		Attendance at events. Quarterly newsletter established	Programme to start April 2012
	1.1.4 Contribute to workshops / staff briefings to cascade information	HBC Coordinator		No of staff briefings	Start April 2012
1.2 Front line staff are aware of fuel poverty issues and are able to signpost	1.2.1 Promote training as part of agencies' core training, including e learning	HBC Coordinator	All agencies Training provider (Eplus / NEA)	No of staff trained	Programme start April 2012

or refer clients to appropriate agencies for assistance	1.2.2 Facilitate training for front line staff who give information	HBC Coordinator	AW steering group	No of staff trained	Programme start April 2012
	1.2.3 Use staff internal communication systems to exchange information e.g. In Touch, Core Brief, intranet	HBC Coordinator		Regular bulletins in internal communication	Start April 2012
1.3 Households who may be vulnerable to fuel poverty are aware of what help is available and how to access it.	1.3.1 Use various publicity techniques for example – (TV, newspapers (eg 'Inside Halton'), DVDs, face to face advice, GP surgeries, libraries, buses, taxis , supermarkets, text messages, mobile surgery bus, community transport. Include successful case studies)	HBC Coordinator	Local groups, retail stores, Sure Start, bingo halls, and leisure centres	No of articles, items	Ongoing
	1.3.2 Link to national awareness raising campaigns	As above		Local publicity evident during national campaigns	Start April 2011
	1.3.3 Ensure that information and events are accessible to vulnerable people.	Halton Information and Advice Providers			Start April 2011
	1.3.4 Ensure systems are in place to support customers to access applications for Affordable warmth support	HBC Coordinator	Age Concern, Welfare Rights	No of householders supported in completing applications	Ongoing
	1.3.5 Contribute to existing literature from Halton Information and Advice Providers and other partners	HBC		Info included in appropriate literature	Ongoing

	1.3.6 Establish web page on Halton BC website for households to access			Page on website	May 2011
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Key Aim 2 : Establish effective referral system amongst agencies in Halton

Outcome	Tasks	Lead agency	Key partners	Outputs	Timescale
2.1 The Council has an understanding of existing mapping and referral structures for Affordable Warmth and is able to identify gaps	2.1.1 Gather information about mapping and referral structures	HBC Coordinator + steering group	All agencies	Clear list of referral systems	Start April 2012
	2.1.2 Identify groups of staff which have direct contact with vulnerable households who need affordable warmth	HBC Coordinator	Eplus, Crisis intervention team. Social Care and Practice	List of groups	By April 2011
	2.1.3 Produce information about Affordable Warmth for the HBC website including types of agencies linked	HBC Coordinator / HBC Communication and marketing	AW Steering group	Information about AW available to all	Start April 2011
2.2 Effective referral systems between agencies are established	2.2.1 Establish an agreed protocol for referral process, including follow up and feedback.	HBC Coordinator	AW Steering Group	Referral process in place	September 2011
	2.2.2 Develop a pro-active referral system from the Contact Centre	As above	Contact Centre	No of referrals from Contact Centre	September 2013
	2.2.3 Establish training sessions for front line staff to understand issues and refer householders, and in some cases provide advice.	As above	See 2.1.2 Energy Projects Plus	No of trained referral staff	Start April 2011 with known referral agencies

	2.2.4 Use trigger questions to identify fuel poverty, and build questions into Assessment Process (Single Assessment Process, Common Assessment Framework) eg for children's services, adult and older people, Sure Start	HBC, NHS,	Children's Services, Sure Start, Social Care	Trigger questions incorporated in assessment documents	By June 2013
2.3 Assistance is targeted at those households most in need	2.3.1 Identify most appropriate targeting methods eg by client group and / or by geographical area, house condition, house type, so that resources are directed effectively.	HBC Coordinator		Improved access to vulnerable households	By June 2012
	2.3.3 Look at area take up through a range of statistics	As above		Target data established	By July 2012

Key Aim 3: Improve the housing stock so it is affordably warm

Outcome	Tasks	Lead agency	Key partners	Outputs	Timescale
3.1 The Council has a clear and robust understanding of the energy performance of dwellings	3.1.1 Establish what data exists, EST home energy checks, private sector stock condition surveys, etc.	HBC policy and strategy	HBC intelligence RSLs EST, Private Landlord's forum	Database of existing energy data to be built upon	Start April 2012
	3.1.2 Work with RSLs through Housing Partnership to collect data	HBC policy and strategy			Ongoing
	3.1.3 Collect data on installed measures through grant schemes	HBC policy and strategy			Ongoing
3.2 Improved SAP rating in RSL stock	3.2.1 Encourage RSLs through Housing Partnership to establish target standard to reduce fuel poverty	Housing Partnership	RSLs	Number of RSL homes at improved std	Start April 2013
	3.2.2 Explore funding sources for hard to treat properties eg those with solid walls, including installing renewable energy.	RSLs	Energy Projects Plus, Utilities,	Finance secured to improve homes	From June 2011 and ongoing
3.3 Improved SAP rating in private rented stock	3.3.1 Use database of Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme to engage and encourage private landlords	HBC Housing Solutions	Landlords' Forum	No of private landlords accessing schemes	All start May 2012
	3.3.2 Work with the Private Landlords' Forum to engage private landlords	HBC Housing Solutions	Landlords' Forum		
	3.3.3 Contact local letting agents to make aware of schemes available	HBC Housing Solutions	Letting agents	Letting agents promote schemes	

	3.3.4 Contact landlords through Housing Benefit data	HBC Housing Solutions	Housing Benefit	No of landlords contacted	
	3.3.5 Enforce improvements to tackle cold hazard through HHSRS	HBC Environmental health		Cold hazard removed	
3.4 Improved SAP rating in owner occupied stock	3.4.1 Use various publicity methods – (see raising awareness Key Aim 1) and target audiences eligible for various schemes	EST Advice Centre		No of measures and advice	Ongoing
	3.4.2 Liaise with other third sector and statutory sector agencies to promote schemes	HBC coordinator	All agencies	No of promotional activities	Ongoing
	3.4.3 Regularly update partners of schemes including publicity	HBC community development / EST Advice Centre	AW Steering Group	Partners increase referral rates	Ongoing
	3.4.4 Consider developing schemes which provide assistance for fuel rich households	HBC coordinator	Energy Projects Plus, neighbouring local authorities	Funding scheme set up	6 months

Key Aim 4 : Maximise incomes and improve access to affordable fuel					
Outcome	Tasks	Lead agency	Key partners	Outputs	Timescales
4.1 Opportunities to maximise household income are developed	4.1.1 Establish which agencies run benefit take up campaigns, and encourage partners keep each other informed about activities and campaigns (via central coordinator)	HBC Welfare Rights	RSLs CAB, Age Concern PCT, third sector agencies, Sure Start	Increased incomes	Ongoing
	4.1.3 Link with national campaigns including 'Keep Warm Keep Well'	HBC coordinator		Increased applications for energy grants	
	4.1.4 Train staff who provide benefits advice, the basics of affordable warmth, health impacts and the links between benefits and energy grants	HBC coordinator	Training provider		Start April 2011
	4.1.5 Look for external funding to support a larger campaign	HBC coordinator			Start April 2011
4.2 Access to affordable fuel is maximised for vulnerable households	4.2.1 Refer households to sources of known advice (Citizens' Advice Bureau, Age Concern)	HBC coordinator	HBC RSLs DWP CAB	No of Households accessing advice	Ongoing
	4.2.2 Access fuel debt training (eg from NEA) for advice providers	HBC coordinator	Training provider	No of staff trained	ongoing
	4.2.3 Produce proposal to Utility Trusts for service to advise customers on how to read meters and understand bills	HBC coordinator		Funding acquired for advisor	April 2013

Key Aim 5 : Ensure coordination and monitoring of the strategy					
Outcome	Tasks	Lead agency	Key partners	Outputs	Timescale
5.1 Affordable Warmth is linked into relevant strategic areas	5.1.1 Input into all relevant strategic areas to ensure affordable warmth is incorporated (eg Housing Strategy, Children's Strategy, Anti Poverty Strategy, Sustainability Strategy and Climate Change Strategy)	HBC	Energy Projects Plus (Domestic Energy Alliance)	Affordable warmth incorporated into all relevant strategies	Immediate and ongoing
	5.1.2 Ensure professionals in associated fields recognise and incorporate affordable warmth into their strategic plans eg NHS	AW Steering Group	NHS		
5.2 Opportunities to share and replicate best practice and provide value for money through joint working are identified	5.2.1 Liaise with other local authorities to share best practice and discuss opportunities for joint working	HBC	NW local authorities, Eplus NEA	X no meetings attended	Immediate and ongoing
	5.2.2 Attend joint meetings eg NEA NW Fuel Poverty Forum to exchange information	AW Steering Group			Ongoing

5.3 Affordable Warmth Strategy is monitored regularly to ensure it is effective and reviewed as necessary	5.3.1 Establish reporting mechanisms to record progress on tasks and outcomes achieved	AW Steering Group	All partners who are listed in the strategy	Up to date strategy	Review progress 6 monthly
	5.3.2 Review the strategy in the light of developments in fuel poverty at a local and national level	AW Steering Group			Ongoing

Appendix 1 - List of workshop delegates

Dave	Austin	Elected Member
Nicola	Bashford	Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Group
Joyce	Baxter	Halton Borough Council (Homeless and Housing Advice)
Paul	Berry	Riverside Housing Association
Susan	Beverley	HBC Older People Services
David	Bowie	Halton Borough Council (Social Care In Practice)
Eric	Britch	Halton & St Helens PCT (Diamond Life)
Phil	Brown	Halton Borough Council (Home Improvement & Independent Living Services)
Ruth	Campbell	Warm Front
Richard	Cobern	Liverpool Housing Trust
Chris	Durr	Community Warden Service
Noreen	Fallon	Plus Dane Housing
Rita	Furnival	Sure Start to Later Life
Oonagh	Gleave	Halton Borough Council (Community Extra Care)
Julia	Green	National Energy Action
Peter	Hallsworth	Halton Housing Trust
Pauline	Harrison	SHAP
Maxine	Henderson	Halton & St Helens PCT
Julie	Hopkins	Halton Borough Council (Welfare Rights)
Debbie	Houghton	Halton Borough Council (Corporate Policy)
Dawn	Kenwright	Age Concern
John	Lennon	Riverside Housing Association
Tina	Longworth	Halton Borough Council (Revenues and Benefits)
Lorna	Lucas	Runcorn Fire Station
Jacqui	Maguire	Halton Borough Council (Older People Services)
Mandi	McDonald	Sure Start to Later Life
Ruth	McDonogh	Halton Borough Council (Divisional Manager, Independent Living Services)
Eddie	Moss	HBC Older People Services
Lynne	Moss	HBC - Community Day Care
Julie	Obiro	Halton Borough Council (Community Extra Care)
Peter	Owen	Energy Projects Plus
Eileen	O'Meara	PCT
John	Patton	Halton Borough Council (Intermediate Care Services)
Deana	Perchard	Trading Standards
Linda	Redhead	Elected Member
Wendy	Salisbury	Halton Borough Council (Principal Environmental Health Officer)
Kerry	Smith	Halton Borough Council (Community Extra Care)
Joanne	Sutton	Halton Borough Council (Housing Strategy)
Teresa	Tierney	Halton Housing Trust
Suzanne	Toner	Sure Start to Later Life
John	Vinson	Energy Projects Plus
Claire	Williams	Halton Borough Council (Community Extra Care)
Jim	Yates	Halton Borough Council (Principal Executive Officer)