

Action for Affordable Warmth Partnership

Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership

Annual report April 2007 – March 2008

Action for Affordable Warmth was launched in October 2001 and was the first strategy of its kind – seven local councils across district, county and unitary boundaries developed the strategy as a joint initiative. This approach continues to bring unique strengths and challenges to the strategy implementation process.

Since the launch, the multi-agency Partnership has been developing links with key agencies that have access to households in, or at risk of fuel poverty. The Partnership continues to draw upon these links to achieve the strategy objectives and implement the action plan. A household is defined as being in fuel poverty if it needs to spend 10% or more of its disposable income to achieve adequate warmth for health and comfort.

During 2007/08, significant media attention has been given to increasing domestic energy costs as a consequence of rising fuel prices. The effect on households will be that a higher proportion of their income will be spent on adequately heating their homes.

Predictions of an increase up to 25% in fuel prices this year could see the average annual energy bill sky-rocketing up to £1,323. This would make prices more than double the level of when the Government came to power in 1997, and it is estimated this would push a further one million households, including around half a million pensioners, into fuel poverty. New figures reveal that these increases would push all pensioners and families on basic benefits into fuel poverty:

- The average bill for 65-74 year-olds would soar to £1,262, a huge 19% of the income of a single pensioner on basic benefits and 12.5% of a couple.
- Pensioners aged 75 plus would also be hit hard, with the average bill rising to £1,114 - 16% of the income of a single pensioner and around 11% for a couple.
- Families would have to pay a whopping average bill of £1340, 14% of the income of a lone-parent family and 12% for a couple family receiving basic benefits.
- Energy price increases of 25% this summer would leave an estimated 5.5 million households in fuel poverty – about the same number affected in 1997.

Source: NEA

Focus for Partnership Activity March 2007 - April 2008

During the year the Partnership identified the following areas as our main areas of action:

- Re-visiting the original strategy – a lot has happened in the past six years, is it time to re-focus?
- Delivering against Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets
- Working with private landlords

Local Area Agreements

Both Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire have targets within their LAA to improve the energy efficiency of homes. In the case of the Gloucestershire LAA this is a “stretch target” relating to measures installed via the Gloucestershire Warm and Well scheme. In the first year the annual target of 2,400 measures was exceeded as a total of 3,625 measures were installed.

South West Regional Activity

NEA South West Fuel Poverty Forum – During the course of 2007/08 there have been several personal changes at NEA and for much of the year there has not been a south west co-ordinator. Meetings have continued to be held and at each there has been representation from the Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire Partnership. In March 2008 Debbie Hewitt from SDC gave a presentation on the WISE Homes grant scheme and the contributions on offer to householders in ‘hard to treat’ homes, as well as incentives to all householders investing in renewable technologies.

Projects

The following is a list of the projects whose activities are directly related to the reduction of fuel poverty in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire:

Gloucestershire Warm and Well began its work in 2001 and since then has provided a single point of help for Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire residents seeking advice and grant funding to make their homes warmer. The scheme continues to deliver heating and insulation improvements throughout Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, working with partners including local authorities, Gloucestershire PCT, fuel supply companies, installers and others.

In 2007-8 3,666 properties were improved with measures to the value of £2.4million. Advice was provided to over 8,000 households and a rolling programme of briefing sessions trained 266 volunteers and health and social care professionals during the course of the year.

Rent Warm, Rent Well continues to be an important part of the wider Warm and Well scheme. During this year the additional funding offered to private sector landlords was moved into the main GEEG (Gloucestershire Energy Efficiency Grant) as it was felt that the previous separation of funding was no longer appropriate. The Warm and Well team helped to organise and promote the Gloucestershire County Landlords Expo (October 2007). In this year 208 enquiries were received from private tenants out of a total of 8,209.

CEEF

During the summer of 2007 DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) launched the Community Energy Efficiency Fund (CEEF). Organisations were invited to bid for a share of the £6.3million funding to improve the effectiveness and co-ordination of Warm Front and Energy Efficiency Commitment delivery through an area based approach. SWEA prepared a bid on behalf of Gloucestershire Warm and Well and was awarded £235,000 to enhance the delivery of the scheme between September 2007 and March 2008. It should be noted that none of the CEEF funding could be spent on installing measures, therefore this piece of work focused on marketing and promotion, as well as managing an increased number of leads.

During this period SWEA employed two additional members of staff to manage the promotional activity at a local level. Domestic & General Insulation Ltd helped to target “vulnerable” households by increasing the level of canvassing activity, as well as trialling the use of telephone canvassing. Some of the funding was used to employ “street canvassers” at events to attract passers-by, and also to produce a range of Warm and Well literature and materials.

Because of the focus on householders receiving income related benefits, and the targets within CEEF to increase the number of referrals to Warm Front, SWEA also employed an additional energy advisor with experience of working as a welfare benefits advisor. Several joint events were also held with local representatives of both the Pension Service and Citizens Advice Bureau.

CEEF funding was also used to improve understanding of income maximisation and benefit up-take issues in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. SWEA commissioned two reports; one concentrated on benefit up-take and the other on affordable warmth issues locally. A property information management database was also purchased. Together these elements helped to target work during the CEEF period, as well as laying down good foundations for future work and targeting.

WISE Homes has been running for a number of years in the Stroud District to contribute towards certain insulation and heating measures in ‘hard to treat’ homes. The WISE Homes grant also contributes towards renewable technology measures in all types of home, with a growing level of interest in these technologies.

Social Housing – Following on from the successful SHARE programme, the SWEA has signed service level agreements with various housing associations and councils to provide energy efficiency advice and to promote energy saving projects. The SHARE forum continues to meet quarterly giving an opportunity to share ideas and best practice.

South Gloucestershire Future Energy and the Gloucestershire County-Wide Renewables Scheme is funded by the councils of Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire, with additional funding from Gloucestershire County Council. The aim is to promote renewable energy in the home. This scheme is

a partnership between the councils and the SWEA and provides free impartial energy advice, as well as a grant of £500 towards the cost of installing renewable measures.

Decent Homes Grant – The Department for Communities and Local Government requires local councils to increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable people. Gloucestershire Warm and Well is able to assist with this work by providing the local authority partners with surveys of homes visited by the scheme contractors. In many cases the installation of loft and/or cavity wall insulation is enough to make a “non-decent” home “decent”, but where this is not the case, the local authorities can contact the householder to offer further assistance in the form of grants or low interest loans to bring the property up to standard.

2007-8 saw a large increase in the number of Decent Homes grants approved in the Tewkesbury Borough Council area from 2 in the 2006-7 period to 56 in 2007-8.

The Welfare Benefits Take-up Campaign has raised awareness of benefits take-up to Gloucester residents. Many people in receipt of a benefit can get help with energy efficiency grants, and a series of ‘Benefit Health Checks’ have been undertaken to inform people of the benefits and grants they are entitled to. Warm and Well has been working with various local partners on joint information events and has expanded its team by recruiting an energy advisor with welfare benefits experience.

Funding for Insulation measures - over £½ million of funding for insulation measures in Gloucestershire was provided by Scottish Power. The measures installed were 1,476 CWI and 1,908 loft insulation installations, as well as 128 hot water cylinder jackets. These measures were fitted across 2,976 homes, 60% of which were social housing and were completely funded. These measures alone have contributed towards more than 23 million tonnes of carbon savings in the area.

Target 2050 – Target 2050 is an exemplar homes project run in partnership between SDC and SWEA, with the aim of reducing carbon emissions by an average of 60% across 23 homes. The homes chosen include a range of property types and ages, and homeowners with varying levels of income, including those on benefits. Appropriate measures will include standard and non-standard insulation and heating measures, depending on the particular needs of the property. In addition a further 90 householders will have energy surveys done this year, many of these in ‘hard to treat’ homes. Setting up installer networks for insulation and renewable technologies is an important part of the project, and one that will benefit homeowners and councils across the whole county.

Councillor Energy Champion project - This project, run in partnership with NEA, has enabled SDC to train a councillor Energy Champion to help to understand and raise the profile of affordable warmth issues within the political realm. The project has included contacting doctors’ surgeries to

inform nurses about affordable warmth issues and grants available, and distributing recycled wooden briquettes to the elderly and those still reliant on solid fuel to heat their homes. This project is will continue or the foreseeable future.

Advice and Awareness-Raising

South Gloucestershire Council continued to go out and about to promote energy efficiency, and this year ventured into leisure centres, farmers markets and hospitals. These proved to be a great success, particularly the energy stand at Frenchay Hospital, which gave them the opportunity to make contact with staff who would like further training in energy saving issues and affordable warmth.

Gloucester City Council ran energy efficiency events in Eastgate shopping mall and at the Matson Neighbourhood Project

The Gloucestershire EEAC has sought partnerships with other organisations in the county, stressing its local presence, profile and knowledge. On-going promotions and campaigns have been run throughout the year, including events for Energy Efficiency Week 2007 and energy advice at seven flu jab clinics. The EEAC continues to incorporate elements of EST's "Save your 20%" into its general marketing strategy. 8630 people were given advice during 2007-08, 8438 via their telephone advice line and 192 via the post.

Training

Several organisations within the AW Partnership have taken up the opportunity to put their staff through the **City and Guilds Energy Awareness (6176) course**.

Gloucestershire Warm and Well has continued to deliver briefing sessions to health and social care professionals on the impact of cold related illness and the dangers of cold, damp, homes. Particular successes in this area include briefings with the Village Agents in Gloucestershire and staff at Children's Centres in the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury areas

Key Achievements – 2007/08

- 3,666 Properties improved (Gloucestershire Warm and Well)
- 8,630 Households receiving advice from EEAC, verbal and by post
- 74 Home visits, (14 in social housing)
- 8,493 Phone calls to Gloucestershire EEAC
- 83 Presentations and events to general public
- 14 Press media articles

Focus for forthcoming year 2008/09

- Income maximisation and Benefit up-take
- AW in the private rental sector
- Lobbying changes to the Warm Front top-up
- Maximisation of partnership links and funding
- To promote PCT and Warm and Well links

Partnership, contact details, meeting dates, progress reports and minutes are available on www.swea.co.uk

Glossary for use at Affordable Warmth meetings

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| ATP | Able to pay (for energy efficiency measures) |
| AW | Affordable Warmth |
| AWP | Affordable Warmth Partnership |
| DFG | Disabled Facilities Grant |
| CEEF | Community Energy Efficiency Fund |
| CERT | Carbon Emissions Reduction Target |
| CFL | Compact Fluorescent Lamp (energy efficient light bulb) |
| CSE | Centre for Sustainable Energy |
| CWI | Cavity Wall Insulation |
| ECA | Energy Conservation Authority |
| EEAC | Energy Efficiency Advice Centre |
| EEC | Energy Efficiency Commitment |
| EST | Energy Saving Trust |
| EWD | Excess Winter Deaths |
| GHLP | Gloucestershire Healthy Living Partnership |
| GRCC | Gloucestershire Rural Community Council |
| GSP | Gloucestershire Strategic Partnership |
| HEC | Home Energy Check form |
| HECA | Home Energy Conservation Act |
| HIA | Home Improvement Agency (Care & Repair etc) |
| HH&SRS | Housing Health & Safety Rating System |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LAA | Local Area Agreement |
| LCBP | Low Carbon Buildings Programme |
| LESP | Local Energy Support Programme |
| LEST | Local Energy Support Team |
| LGPF | Local Government Performance Framework |
| LSP | Local Strategic Partnership |
| NEA | National Energy Action |
| NPI | National Performance Indicator |
| PCT | Primary Care Trust |
| SAP | Standard Assessment Procedure (for energy efficiency of residential dwellings) |
| SWEA | Severn Wye Energy Agency |