

Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire Action for Affordable Warmth Partnership

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Annual report April 2008 – March 2009

There are over 21 million households in the UK (census 2001) and NEA (National Energy Action) estimates that around 4 million are in fuel poverty, representing 1 in 5 of all households in the country – an increase of 26% since 2007. In the South West region the percentage of fuel poor households has risen from 6.5% in 2003 to 19.9% in 2008 (UK Fuel Poverty 6th Annual Progress Report). Fuel Poverty is an urgent and ever growing problem.

The definition of affordable warmth is where a household can achieve temperatures needed to maintain health and comfort for expenditure of less than 10% of income. Fuel poverty results from a combination of low household income, unaffordable energy costs and inadequate thermal insulation and inefficient and uneconomic heating systems. Most at risk are older people, single parent families and people with poor health or disabilities who have a higher than average need for warmth.

The current economic climate and rising energy bills has exacerbated the problem of fuel poverty and the situation looks likely to get worse over time. With average households nationally facing an average dual fuel energy bill of £1,300 – around 125% higher than in 2003, the challenge is great.

Action for Affordable Warmth, established in October 2001, is working hard to meet the challenges of fuel poverty in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

The multi-agency Partnership continues to implement the Affordable Warmth Strategy by deepening links with key agencies that have access to households in, or at risk of, fuel poverty. The Affordable Warmth strategy document was updated in 2008 to take into account the many changes in the fuel poverty arena since 2001. The new document re-establishes the main aims and objectives of the Partnership and clearly lays out an action plan to meet the ever increasing challenge of fuel poverty. The strategy contains valuable local fuel poverty and housing data, including a range of fuel poverty maps to track areas of particular concern within Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire.

The Partnership has met at quarterly during 2008/9 with attendance from, amongst others; local authorities, Pension Service, Care & Repair, SWEA, NEA, EAGA plc, Primary Care Trusts, Citizens Advice Bureau, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council and Age Concern Gloucestershire.

The Partnership invites and encourages all organisations interested in improving affordable warmth and reducing fuel poverty in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire to attend these open meetings. For more information contact the chair of the group, Kaye Welfare (kaye@swea.co.uk).

The Partnership members continue to work to raise awareness of affordable warmth issues through presentations to key agencies, public exhibitions, staff training sessions and press releases. This report provides a breakdown of key areas of activity and projects for 2008/09 across the Partnership.

Focus for Partnership Activity March 2008 - April 2009

During the year the Partnership has concentrated on various themes concerning Affordable Warmth. These meetings have been relevant and informative.

- July 08 – Income Maximisation
- October 08 – AW in the Rental Sector
- Dec 08 - AW and the Health Sector
- March 09 - Impact of the Credit Crunch

Details of all meetings, presentations and additional relevant information can be found on the newly updated Affordable Warmth website (www.swea.co.uk/affordablewarmth)

Projects 2008/2009

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 – 08/09

In the past year Gloucestershire Warm and Well has continued to offer grants, advice and home visits to householders in Gloucestershire at risk of cold related illness. More than 8,700 people have been assisted by the scheme in the past twelve months making this the busiest year since the scheme began in 2001. The local authorities in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire made more than £1.2million available to householders in the form of grants to improve heating and insulation and as a result almost £2million worth of measures being installed. Gloucestershire Warm and Well continues to work closely with local authorities, NHS Gloucestershire, members of the Affordable Warmth Partnership as well as other community groups. Great progress has been made in the past year towards the Gloucestershire Local Area Agreement stretch target and it is anticipated that the three year target will be met within the first three months of 2009/10. In the coming year Gloucestershire Warm and Well will be collecting data and targeting householders to help to make progress towards the national performance indicator (NPI) 187 which seeks to reduce the number of vulnerable people experiencing fuel poverty. For more information on Gloucestershire Warm and Well please go to www.swea.co.uk

Social Housing and SHARE

SWEA continue to provide advice to social housing tenants on managing their fuel bills. In the latter half of 2008 Stroud District Council signed a service level agreement to enable SWEA to provide advice to their social (council) housing staff and tenants. Over the year SWEA have manned stands at 19 events, reaching over 450 tenants, and have run training sessions in energy awareness for 30 social housing staff. SWEA have also visited the homes of 84 vulnerable tenants to offer advice and complete energy surveys, and have published articles in 9 editions of the tenants' magazine.

SWEA continue to run the SHARE forum on a quarterly basis, and have had some well attended meetings this year, including a session on Energy Performance Certificates where a speaker from NES attended to introduce the EPC software and answer questions around how energy ratings are calculated.

Energy Neighbourhoods project

Energy Neighbourhoods was an energy saving competition between community groups around behavioural change. The competition started in November 2008 with 17 communities in Gloucestershire signed up to participate. Over the next 6 months householders were supported by energy masters and sent tips from SWEA to help them reduce their energy consumption. They entered meter readings onto a website www.energyneighbourhoods.eu which kept them informed of how much they saved. The competition phase of this project ends on 30th April, and it is anticipated that average savings across the communities will be around 11%.

Target 2050

Stroud District Council, in partnership with SWEA, is continuing to enable carbon reductions in over 20 exemplar homes across the Stroud District. Homeowners are now busy installing measures ranging from solid wall insulation to the latest renewable technologies, and there is an emphasis on establishing lasting behavioural change. The installer networks to support the project are being expanded and these help provide work for local businesses. Although the majority of homeowners participating in the project fall into the 'able to pay' category, there are 2 households on low incomes who are receiving additional funding from SDC to make their homes more energy efficient.

S2S (Solid to Sustainable)

Stroud District Council's social (council) housing and private housing department are working in partnership with E-ON to install up to 20 ground source heat pumps in council properties and between 5-15 heat pumps in privately owned homes in the Frampton-On-Severn area. Frampton is off-gas, and renewable technologies have a particularly important role to play in providing efficient and affordable heating. Installations are due to take place over the summer.

This is the first time that SDC has been able to offer a renewable form of heating to vulnerable and fuel poor private households, and we hope that as many private residents as possible will take advantage of the opportunity. There is a sliding scale of grant funding available from E-ON according to the fuel being replaced and the financial means of the recipient. SDC is providing an additional sliding scale of grant funding to enable as many private homeowners as possible to participate in the scheme.

South Gloucestershire Council is also working on a Ground source heat pump project in partnership with Merlin and E-ON.

Energy Advice Project

The Energy Advice Project based at the Bristol Debt Advice Centre has continued to grow in the past year 08-09, offering free energy advice and assistance in making charitable applications to clear utility debt to clients experiencing financial difficulties.

The project covers the Bristol, Bath, Wiltshire, Somerset, Gloucestershire and Dorset areas and during the past twelve months was able to offer energy advice to over 425 people. We applied for almost 300 grants on behalf of clients from the British Gas and EDF Energy Trusts to clear gas and electricity arrears and for help with essential household items during this period. These applications continued to enjoy a very high success rate of over 90%. £172,995 was awarded to clients through the Energy Advice Project this year, a growth of 105% from the previous financial year. The Energy Advice Project has also continued to raise awareness of the work of the Trusts amongst other organisations through presentations and events. In the coming year the Energy Advice Project will expand its services to offer monthly energy saving and awareness interactive workshops to clients as well as a fortnightly utilities drop-in in the South Gloucestershire region.

Gloucestershire Health and Community Wellbeing Partnership(GHCWP)

1. Healthy Gloucestershire

In October 2008 Gloucestershire Health and Community Wellbeing Partnership launched its 10 year strategy Healthy Gloucestershire. It has been developed by GHCWP but it overlaps with the priorities of all the thematic partnerships and District Local Strategic Partnerships. It is important because it will drive the work of the partnership over the next 10 years and it intended to enable all of Gloucestershire Conference to help influence planning and decision making.

There are ten priority areas for action identified for Gloucestershire Health and Community Wellbeing Partnership to focus efforts on over the next ten years. These are listed below. Reducing Health inequalities is a cross cutting theme that underpins the work of the partnership in each area.

- a) Active and Healthy ageing
- b) Reduce obesity
- c) Reduce alcohol harm
- d) Reduce smoking prevalence
- e) Improved sexual health
- f) Better access to services for all
- g) Healthier workplaces
- h) Improved emotional health and wellbeing
- i) Putting people first – transforming social care
- j) Accessible, Healthy and Safe Housing

The strategy and priority cards can be downloaded at:
<http://www.gloshcwp.nhs.uk/healthylivin236282.html>

The priority area Accessible, Healthy and Safe housing highlights the priority of ensuring that vulnerable people live in decent homes and the national target to reduce fuel poverty. The Affordable Warmth Partnership has direct links to the delivery of this priority area and reports on progress to the delivery group.

2. Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Excess Winter Mortality Task Group. (This is a committee of elected members across the 7 districts, co-ordinated by the County)

In November 2008 the Health Overview and Scrutiny committee commenced a review of the extent and causes of excess winter mortality in Gloucestershire. The Task Group received a presentation from the Affordable Warmth Partnership at one

of the review meetings and attending a quarterly meeting in December 2008. The Task Group completed comprehensive report that was presented to the full HOSC committee with a set of 11 recommendations. The following are for action by the AWP in 2009/10.

Recommendation 2 - *That the Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership consider whether existing information channels can be used more effectively to spread awareness of the impartial energy advice available through the Energy Savings Trust.*

Recommendation 3 - *That the Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership ensures that all District Councils understand the value of the Gloucestershire Warm and Well Scheme and that it encourage all District Councils to provide funding to the Scheme that adequately reflects the level of need within their area.*

The Action Plan for 09/10 will include activity to progress these recommendations and report progress to the HOSC. The review has helped to raise the profile of the impact of cold damp homes on excess winter mortality and the work of the Affordable Warmth Partnership.

To see the Excess Winter mortality report, please see link to AW Partnership website. www.swea.co.uk/affordablewarmth

Advice and Awareness Raising

Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre

The Energy Saving Trust regionalised the advice service provision in the South West during 2008. This new regional advice centre is called the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre (ESTAC) and the launch took place on September 29th 2009. Severn Wye Energy Agency have formed a consortium with 3 other energy agencies in the South West to manage this ESTAC, and from September 29th the Gloucestershire Energy Advice Centre became the eastern hub of the South West ESTAC. From the hub which is managed by SWEA, householders from Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire can now access advice on energy saving. The advice call centre was moved to a more central location for this area, Swindon, and the office there went live with a new team of advisors on December 3rd.

An unprecedented number of households were advised on energy efficiency during 2008/09 via the free phone advice number. In total 21,886 unique householders received advice over the year, two and a half times as many as the previous year, and 8,846 home energy checks were completed and returned

Care and Repair

In the past year Care and Repair have continued to advise people on heating and energy efficiency issues and direct them to SWEA, to access further advice and help with installing measures were necessary. Care and Repair refers to SWEA for information and advice for clients.

South Gloucestershire works with PCT

South Gloucestershire Council is developing a vulnerable persons referral system in partnership with Community Care and Community Engagement teams at South Gloucestershire Council. This involves a 1st point referral system.

South Gloucestershire is also increasing its profile of energy efficiency with the local PCT trust, especially with older adults and community nurses. The Council is included in signposting literature and is developing a warm homes risk screen with health practitioners.

There has been increased leaflet distribution with Meals on Wheels and mobile libraries and additional talks to the community, focusing on the over 65's with poor health and their carers. South Glos has conducted damp and mould assessments with subsequent signposting to the local ESTAC, and smart meters will soon be available through local library services

Focus for the forthcoming year 2009/10

The AW Partnership has developed the Gloucestershire NI 187 Delivery Plan as the focus of the Partnerships work in Gloucestershire for the coming year, full details below. In South Gloucestershire as its underlying focus???

Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership Delivery Plan 2009/201

Aim 1: Partnerships and strategies

1.1 To ensure our partnership involves all relevant organisations and engages with other partnerships.

1.1.2 Organise four meetings annually of the Affordable Warmth Partnership (AWP) and two meetings annually of the Social Housing Action to Reduce Energy Consumption (SHARE)

Lead Officer: Chair of the AWP (Kaye Welfare)

Date: April 09 – March 2010

1.2 To ensure all relevant strategies acknowledge issues that relate to affordable warmth

1.2.1 Encourage all AWP partners to annually review their business plans to ensure due regard is given to NI 187 issues

Lead Officer: Chair of the AWP (Kaye Welfare)

Date: April 09 – March 2010

1.2.2 Review the AWP delivery plan annually and to amend as appropriate

Lead Officer: Chair of the AWP (Kaye Welfare)

Date: March 2010

1.3 To access funding and other resources from key partners

1.3.1 AWP will make a bid to the SW Regional Housing Body (through GOSW)

Lead Officer: Maria Hickman

Date: October 2009

1.3.2 Submit a funding to RIEP for hard to treat exemplar homes.

Lead Officer: Kaye Welfare

Date: October 2009

1.3.3 Working with SHARE to identify social housing providers who are allocating funds for stock improvement and to promote the installation of energy efficient measures as part of the improvements.

Lead Officer: David Steele

Date: February 2010

1.4 To encourage others to use the principle that homes must be affordable to run, not just to buy or rent

1.4.1 To present the NI 187 delivery plan to the 5 themed partnerships of the Gloucestershire Conference.

Lead Officer: Kaye Welfare /Maria Hickman

Date: March 2010

1.4.2 To attend the Core Housing Strategy Group meeting to update the group on NI 187 delivery plan –

Lead Officer: David Steele

Date: Dec 2009

1.4.3 Each AWP district representative to disseminate presentation to members /district LSP's

Lead Officers: Maria Hickman, Julie Davies , Mark Nelson, Lorraine Drew, Gary Parker, Stephen McDonald.

Date: March 2010

Aim 2: Improve energy efficiency in all housing

2.1 To work together to collect and make use of data on the energy efficiency of homes

2.1.1 Establish a start and finish group to develop recommendations on data collection and analysis.

Lead Officer: David Steele

Date: Feb 2010

2.2 To improve energy efficiency in existing housing

2.2.1 Ensure the Warm and Well scheme continues through 2010/2011

Lead Officer: Maria Hickham

Date: Feb 2010

2.2.3. To report on the number of homes improved under the Warm and Well scheme

Lead Officer: Maria Hickham

Date: July 2010

2.2.4 Develop a project to work with private sector tenants to improve energy efficiency awareness and reduce energy costs

Lead Officer: Maria Hickman

Date: November 2009

2.2.5 Deliver exemplar homes project focussing on hard to treat homes –

Lead Officer: Kaye Welfare

Date: May 2010

2.2.6 Assess potential of the Community Sustainable Energy Programme and develop proposal for Gloucester (CSEP)

Lead Officer: Stephen McDonnell

Date: Dec 2009

2.3 To involve private landlords

2.3.1 Review Rent Warm Rent Well activity - Warm and Well steering Group

Lead Officer: Maria Hickman

Date: December 2009

2.3.2 Attend one meeting of the Landlords Forum to promote Rent Warm Rent Well activity grants

Date: October 2009

Lead Officer: Matt Matheou (SWEA)

2. 3.3 develop an accreditation scheme for Landlords with emphasis on upgrading property for EPCs

Lead Officer: David Steele

March 2010

2.4 To involve Registered Social Landlords

2.4.1 Produce a report on the activity carried out under social housing provider

Service level agreement with SWEA

Lead Officer Gilda Costley

Date: May 2010

2.4.2 Work with SHARE Housing forum to develop opportunities for them to deliver on NI 187 and Affordable Warmth targets by attending two SHARE forums per annum. Lead Officer David Steele

Lead Officer David Steele

Date: March 2010

2.5 To promote a high standard of energy efficiency in newly built homes

2.5.1 Request an update to the AWP from the Core Housing Strategy Group regarding the Group's activities to improve energy efficiency in new built homes for vulnerable groups

Lead Officer Pippa Stroud

Date: March 2010

2.5.2 Develop the potential of AWP working with CHSG

Lead Officer Pippa Stroud

Date: March 2010

Aim 3: Provide advice and information

3.1 To maintain a co-ordinated approach to energy advice provision relevant to local needs

3.1.2 To ensure the continued delivery of the LA's energy advice SLA with SWEA.

Lead Officer: Barbara Moreton (SWEA)

Date: March 2010

3.1.3 To ensure the continued delivery of the RSLs energy advice SLA with SWEA.

Lead Officer: Gilda Costley

Date: March 2010

3. 2 To integrate income maximisation and energy advice services

3.2.1 Undertake two briefings session for frontline staff in LA's advising on benefits.

Lead Officer: Kaye Welfare

Date: March 2010

3.2.2 Develop referral mechanisms between Warn and Well and benefit maximisation

Lead Officer: Matt Matheou

Date: March 2010

3.3 To train key people to provide advice

3.3.1 Undertake two training sessions for key people- e.g. village agents, CAB, Age Concern and other relevant staff.

Lead Officer: Debbie Hewitt
Date: March 2010

3.3.2 Work with the NHS in training key community workers in areas of deprivation in Gloucester and Cheltenham
Lead Officer: Di Billingham
Date: March 2010

3.4 To make advice accessible to all

3.4.1 Promoting the use of EST freephone number and website by marketing activities in partnership with Warm and Well, EST and LA SLA's.
Lead Officer: Kaye Welfare
Date: March 2010

3.5 To communicate national data and campaigns locally

3.5.1 Identify opportunities to promote national campaigns locally, i.e. Warm Front and EST and NEA.
Lead Officer: Chair, AWP
March 2010

Aim 4: Identify and help people at risk of fuel poverty

4.1 To maintain and develop existing Gloucestershire Warm and Well referral systems

4.1.2 Carry out postal SAP survey across county
Lead Officer: Maria Hickman
Date: February 2010

4.2 To identify those at risk of fuel poverty

4.2.1 Analyse survey data to identify opportunities to target homes at greatest risk and report back to the AWP the outcome
Lead Officer: Maria Hickman
Date: May 2010

4.3 To target the homes which present the greatest risk of fuel poverty

4.3.1 Attend flu clinics and community based events
Lead Officer: Matt Matheou
Date: December 2009

4.4 To provide the enhanced support and information required to help those in most need

4.4.1 Annual review of the NI 186 delivery plan
Lead Officer: Chair, AWP
Date: June 2010