

Scrutiny

Final Report

Excess Winter Mortality Task-Group

Gloucestershire Health Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

13th March 2009



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Excess Winter Mortality Task-Group

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Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Excess Winter Mortality Task-Group

Final Report

Chair's Foreword

I am pleased to present the final report of the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Excess Winter Mortality Task-Group.

The aim of the Task-Group was to examine the extent and causes of excess winter mortality, consider what actions were being taken locally, report the findings to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and make recommendations on the findings.

During the process it became obvious that the work of the Task-Group was extremely timely. It took place from November 2008 to February 2009 during a winter where not only was the weather severe, but also, as a result of the "credit crunch", financial implications became apparent which in the future will undoubtedly impact on the issue.

We would like to give our grateful thanks to the witnesses that gave such detailed information to our members or welcomed us to their meetings.

I would like to give my thanks to the members for their hard work.

Finally I would like to thank Richard Thorn and Alison Wantenaar. It was Richard's final contribution to a HOSC task-group and as always a tremendous one with his skills and knowledge producing the 1st draft before he left and handing over to Alison who had been a valuable part of the group throughout to complete the final draft.

I very much hope that the Committee will see fit to endorse all of the report's recommendations.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Penny Hall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Councillor Penny Hall
Chairman, Excess Winter Mortality Task-Group

Excess Winter Mortality Task-Group

Final Report

Section 1 – Introduction

1.0 Definition of excess winter mortality

1.1 Excess winter mortality refers to the number of additional deaths during the winter period compared to the rest of the year. This is calculated by comparing the total number of deaths in winter (from December to March) with the average number of deaths in the preceding and following four-month periods (August to November and April to July). This is the accepted measure of excess winter mortality used by the Office of National Statistics.

2.0 Terms of Reference

2.1 The task-group was established to examine the extent and causes of excess winter mortality and consider what actions were being undertaken locally to address the issue.

2.2 Specifically the task-group had the following objectives:

- To examine the extent and causes of excess winter mortality, particularly focusing on:
 - Prevalence of excess winter mortality in Gloucestershire compared with other areas in the South West, UK, and Europe.
 - Variations in excess winter mortality between district, and within districts (possibly at Ward level).
 - Exploring any links between age and/or deprivation and increased winter mortality.
 - The extent of fuel poverty within Gloucestershire and the link between this and excess winter mortality.
 - Housing conditions in Gloucestershire and the link between this and excess winter mortality.
- To understand what is being done locally by various agencies including Health, Local Authorities, and the Severn and Wye Energy Agency to help reduce excess winter mortality including:
 - Implementing the 'Affordable Warmth Strategy'.
 - Progress against the Local Area Agreement targets LI19 and NI187.
- To report findings back to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and make recommendations as appropriate to help reduce winter mortality.

3.0 Membership

3.1 The task-group was made up of the following 4 members of the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Councillor Penny Hall (Cheltenham Borough Council)
- Councillor Jan Lugg (Gloucester City Council)
- Councillor Margaret Odgen (Tewkesbury Borough Council)
- Councillor Brian Oosthuysen (Gloucestershire County Council)

3.2 Councillor Penny Hall was elected to Chair the task-group.

4.0 Methodology

4.1 This investigation had to be undertaken in a relatively short period of time so that the task-group could complete its work and report its findings back to the HOSC by March 2009, as this was the last meeting of the committee before the County Council elections. The task-group has therefore attempted to get a good overview of the issues, rather than focusing on any aspect in detail.

4.2 The task-group held 4 meetings. The first meeting was to agree the terms of reference for the investigation. This was followed by three evidence-gathering meetings at which the group heard from the following witnesses:

- Dr Shona Arora, Director of Public Health – To discuss the extent and causes of excess winter mortality in Gloucestershire. The Public Health Information Unit produced a detailed report on excess winter mortality to share with the task-group at this meeting.
- Dianna Billingham, County Partnerships Manager and Vice Chair of the Action for Affordable Warmth Partnership, Gloucestershire PCT – To discuss the Action for Affordable Warmth Partnership and the Warm and Well Scheme
- Sarah Giff, Project Manager, Severn Wye Energy Agency – To discuss the Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Strategy and action to tackle fuel poverty in Gloucestershire.
- Maria Hickman, Housing Renewal Manager, Stroud District Council – To discuss Local Area Agreement targets LI19 and NI187.

4.3 In addition to these meetings the task-group consulted the National Energy Action website, and considered the most recent Private Sector Housing Condition Surveys that had been produced by each of the 6 District Councils.

4.4 Members of the task-group also attended a meeting of the Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire Action for Affordable Warmth Partnership. The focus of this meeting was on 'health issues related to affordable warmth' and so was directly relevant to the work of the group.

4.5 The task-group would like to thank all of the witnesses that attended its meetings to share their knowledge of the issue, and would particularly thank the Public Health Information Unit for their detailed report, which provided much of the background information for this review.

Section 2 – The extent of excess winter mortality

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This section provides an overview of the extent of excess winter mortality in Gloucestershire. It includes information on deaths in Gloucestershire over the past 4 winters (2004/5 to 2007/8), plus comparative information about the number of deaths in each Government region, and how Britain compares to other European countries. The information is based primarily on data provided to the task-group by the Public Health Information Unit, and on information taken from the National Energy Action website.

1.2 The data used by the task-group makes comparisons based on the Excess Winter Deaths Index (EWDI). This is the key statistic used by the Office for National Statistics and is calculated by dividing the number of excess winter deaths by the average non-winter deaths. This is then expressed as a percentage to show the percentage increase in winter deaths compared to the non-winter period (e.g. a EWDI score of 15 would mean there were 15% more deaths in the winter period compared to the non-winter period).

2.0 Britain compared to Europe

2.1 Levels of excess winter mortality are higher in Britain than in many other European countries, including those with lower winter temperatures such as Scandinavia. According to National Energy Action in addition to the Scandinavian countries other countries such as Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands also have lower levels of excess winter mortality than Britain.

2.2 Britain does not, however, have the highest levels of excess winter mortality in Europe. The highest levels are found in Spain and Portugal. According to National Energy Action the likely explanation for the high levels in these countries is the quality of the housing stock, which is not built to protect from cold weather, and the comparative poverty in some areas of these countries.

3.0 English Regional Comparisons

3.1 Based on data for the winter of 2005/6 the South West Region has the second highest level of excess winter mortality in England. The table below is taken from the report compiled by the Public Health Information Unit and demonstrates the number of excess winter deaths in each Government Region in 2005/6.

Excess Winter Mortality by Government office region

GOR	EWD Index	Excess deaths 2005/2006
South East	19.9	4700
South West	17.3	2800
East	17.1	2600
West Midlands	16.7	2800
London	16.1	2600
East Midlands	15.4	2000
North West	14.1	3100
North East	13.4	1100
Yorkshire and the Humber	13.2	2100
England	16.2	24200
England and Wales	16.1	25700

Source: ONS/SWPHO

3.2 The table demonstrates that not only does the South West have the second highest score on the EWDI in England, but it also has a higher level than the average for both England, and England and Wales as a whole.

3.3 The task-group was surprised to learn that levels of excess winter mortality are actually lower in the North of England, where winter temperatures are lower, than they are in the South of England.

4.0 Excess Winter Mortality in Gloucestershire

4.1 The table below is taken from the report compiled by the Public Health Information Unit and demonstrates the number of excess winter deaths in Gloucestershire over each of the past four winters.

Excess deaths in Gloucestershire - persons

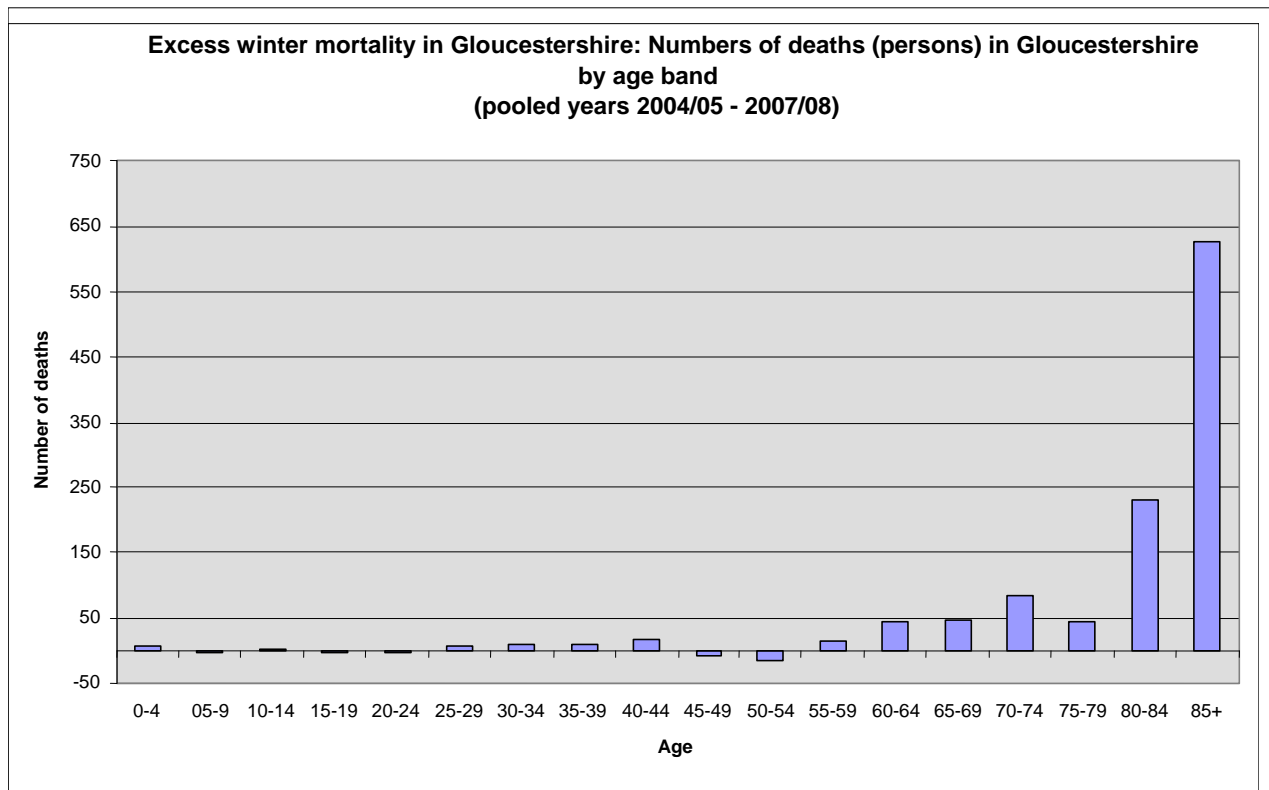
Winter year	EWDI	Gloshire
2004/05	13	251
2005/06	16	293
2006/07	19	334
2007/08	14	236
4 yrs pooled	15	1114
Mean per annum		278

Source: ONS (PHMF)

4.2 The table demonstrates that on average across the past four winters there have been 278 excess winter deaths each year. Comparing the figures for Gloucestershire in 2005/6 to the regional figures for that year shows that the level of excess winter mortality in Gloucestershire (using the EWDI) is actually lower than the level for the South West as a whole, and is very slightly lower than the levels for England, and England and Wales, as a whole.

4.3 The task-group has also considered information on levels of excess winter mortality within each District Council area. Based on the Excess Winter Death Index, and using pooled data from the three years 2005/6 to 2007/8, Cotswold District and Tewkesbury Borough have the highest levels of excess winter mortality (with EWDI scores of 23 and 22 respectively), and Cheltenham Borough and Gloucester City have the lowest levels (with EWDI scores of 8 and 12 respectively). The Forest of Dean has an EWDI score of 17 and Stroud has an EWDI score of 18.

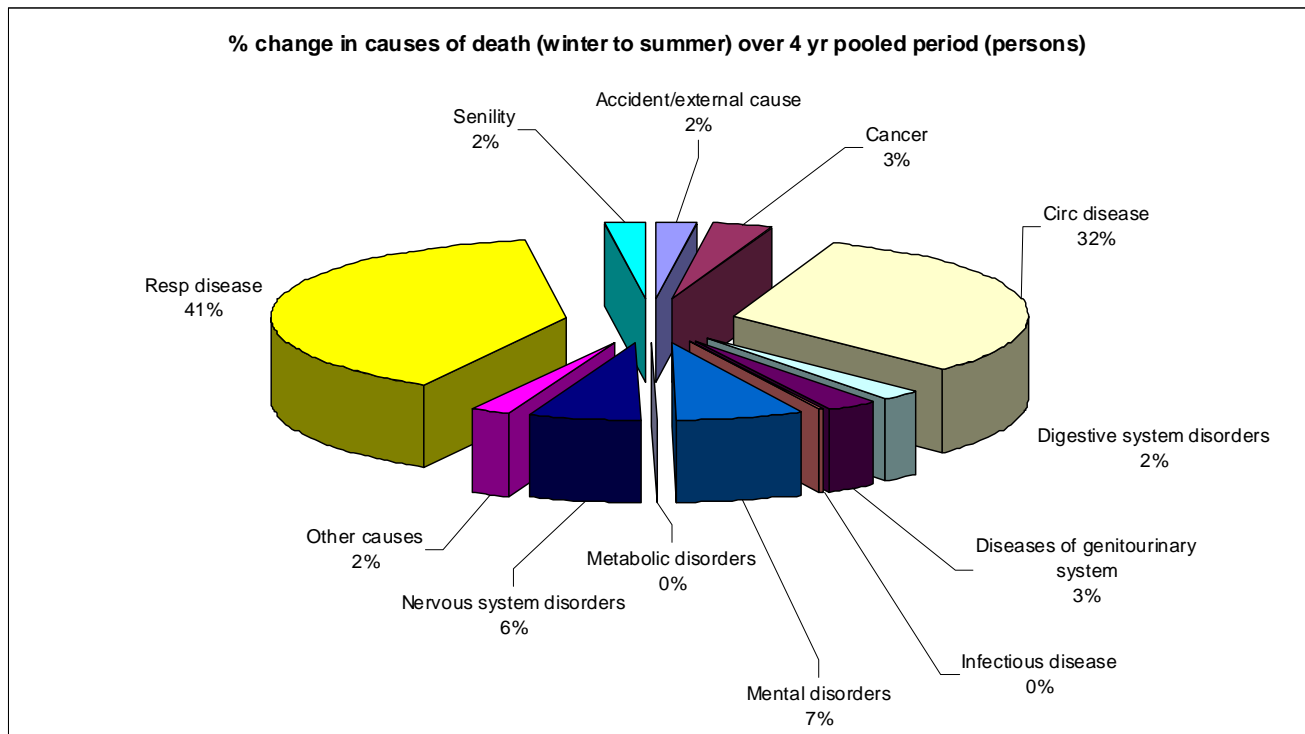
4.4 People over the age of 60 are most at risk during the winter period, with the highest levels of excess winter mortality being amongst the 85 plus age band. Before the age of 60 years old there does not appear to be any correlation between age and winter mortality, as demonstrated in the following graph produced by the Public Health Information Unit.



4.5 The task-group has been informed that research undertaken outside of Gloucestershire has suggested that there is no link between excess winter mortality and deprivation. This is supported by research undertaken by the Public Health Information Unit based on local figures, which suggests that whilst there is a strong relationship between increased mortality (in both summer and winter) and deprivation in general, there is not necessarily a relationship between deprivation and excess winter mortality.

5.0 Cause of death

5.1 The following graph, produced by the Public Health Information Unit, demonstrates the percentage increase in winter deaths compared to summer deaths for a broad range of causes of death based on ICD-10 codes (International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems).



5.1 The graph demonstrates that there is little change in the number of deaths from most causes between summer and winter, with the notable exception of respiratory disease, which shows a 41% increase in the winter period, and circulatory disease, which shows a 32% increase in the winter period.

6.0 Conclusions

6.1 The task-group has learnt that Gloucestershire has lower levels of excess winter mortality than across England and Wales as a whole, and lower levels than across the South West Region. Whilst this is reassuring this does not mean that we can be complacent about the issue. Britain has higher mortality rates than many other European countries, and the rates in Gloucestershire are also above those in the best performing European countries. Challenging ourselves to be the best in Europe in this area would be very much in line with the general ambitions for health services in the region set by NHS South West.

6.2 Excess winter mortality does not appear to be closely linked to deprivation, although there clearly is a link between deprivation and mortality rates in general.

The task-group was a little surprised by this finding as the expectation was that people in the more deprived areas would experience increased problems with fuel poverty, may experience worse housing conditions, and would be likely to experience more health problems in general.

- 6.3** There is a link between age and excess winter mortality, with levels of winter mortality rising from the 60 plus age group, and increasing dramatically after the age of 85.
- 6.4** The Director of Public Health has explained to the group that the main cause of excess winter mortality is not hypothermia, but rather is respiratory and circulatory disease. Cold and damp housing conditions can often exacerbate respiratory and circulatory problems and therefore it is no surprise that research has shown a strong relationship between excess winter mortality and homes that are hard to heat.

Section 3 – The Impact of Housing Conditions

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Research has shown that there is a strong relationship between cold and damp housing and excess winter mortality. Cold and damp housing can exacerbate existing medical problems including asthma, influenza, bronchitis, pneumonia, heart conditions, and mental health issues. In extreme cases it can even cause hypothermia. Therefore, much of the work of the task-group has focused on efforts to provide affordable warmth, and therefore reduce some of the risk of excess winter deaths. This section focuses on what the task-group has learnt about housing conditions and fuel poverty in Gloucestershire, and on actions that are being taken to help ensure that people are able to enjoy affordable warmth.

2.0 Housing Conditions in Gloucestershire

2.1 Section 605 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 places a requirement on District Councils to monitor the condition of housing within their district. The task-group understands that in order to fulfil this requirement District Councils undertake a Private Sector Housing Conditions survey on a 5 yearly basis.

2.2 The task-group has considered the findings of the most recent household survey for each district in order to learn more about local housing conditions. It should be noted that District Councils do not all undertake surveys at the same time within the 5-year period, and therefore the age of the data available varies and so any comparisons between districts must be made with some caution (for example the most recent survey for the Forest of Dean District was undertaken in 2004, whereas surveys of Tewkesbury Borough and Cotswold District took place in 2008).

2.3 Based on pooled data from across the 6 District Council household surveys it can be estimated that there are 58,206 private dwellings within the county that fail to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard, with an estimated 29,289 failing to provide reasonable thermal comfort and/or effective heating. Furthermore, based on the information in the surveys the average SAP¹ rating for private dwellings in Gloucestershire is 55, although as some of the survey data is 4 years old this figure may now be higher. This SAP rating compares poorly against the national minimum SAP rating target of 65, and against the SAP rating of 72 that the Severn Wye Energy Agency suggest is needed to 'fuel poverty proof' a home. Current Building Regulations dictate that new homes should be built with a SAP rating of at least 80.

¹ SAP stands for Standard Assessment Procedure and is the Government's method for rating the energy efficiency of dwellings.

2.4 Housing Conditions by District

- 2.4.1 Cheltenham Borough Council** – The most recent Cheltenham Borough Council private sector household survey was undertaken in 2005. According to the survey 12,000 dwellings (26.4% of all dwellings) failed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, with 31.6% of the dwellings failing to meet the standard being occupied by vulnerable people (i.e. those on income or disability related benefits). The survey also demonstrates that 6,600 dwellings (14.6% of all dwellings) failed to provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort, and that the average SAP rating in Cheltenham is 60.
- 2.4.2 Cotswold District Council** – The most recent Cotswold District Council private sector household survey was undertaken in 2008. According to the survey 9841 dwellings (25.6% of all dwellings) failed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, with 18.9% of these homes being occupied by vulnerable people. The survey also demonstrates that 3978 dwellings (10.3% of all dwellings) failed to provide effective insulation and/or heating, and that the average SAP rating in the Cotswolds was 55. The survey also suggested that 10.3% of homes in the Cotswolds had a SAP rating of less than 35.
- 2.4.3 Forest of Dean District Council** – The most recent Forest of Dean District Council private sector housing survey was undertaken in 2004. According to the survey 9713 dwelling (32% of all dwellings) failed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, with 19% of these dwellings being occupied by vulnerable people. The survey also demonstrates that 4034 dwellings (13.1% of all dwellings) failed to provide reasonable thermal comfort, and that the average SAP rating in the Forest of Dean was just 46. The survey also suggested that 56% of properties had a SAP rating of less than 40, and that 2% had a SAP rating of less than 10.
- 2.4.4 Gloucester City Council** – The most recent Gloucester City Council private sector housing survey was undertaken in 2005. According to the survey 7229 dwellings (16.3% of all dwellings) failed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, with 32% of these dwellings being occupied by vulnerable people. The survey also demonstrated that 2864 dwellings (6.5% of all dwellings) failed to provide reasonable modern amenities and/or adequate thermal comfort, and that the average SAP in Gloucester was 61.
- 2.4.5 Stroud District Council** - The most recent Stroud District Council private sector housing survey was undertaken in 2006. According to the survey 14,400 dwellings (34.3% of all dwellings) failed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, with 5.5% of these dwellings being occupied by vulnerable people. The survey also demonstrated that 8600 dwellings (20.5% of all dwellings) failed to provide a reasonable level of thermal comfort, and that the average SAP in Stroud is just 48. The survey also suggested that 13.4% of dwellings had a SAP rating of less than 30.

2.4.6 Tewkesbury Borough Council - The most recent Tewkesbury Borough Council private sector housing survey was undertaken in 2008. According to the survey 5023 dwellings (14.3% of all dwellings) failed to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard. The survey also demonstrated that 3213 dwellings (9.2% of all dwellings) failed to provide a reasonable level of thermal comfort, and that the average SAP rating is 62. The survey also suggested that 4.5% of dwellings had a SAP rating below 35, with a further 34.2% having a SAP rating between 35 and 59.

2.5 The District Council private sector housing condition surveys suggest that there are some significant housing issues that need to be overcome in order to ensure that people can enjoy affordable warmth. The average SAP rating for the County is 55, below the recommended Government minimum of 65 and the level well below the 'fuel poverty proofing' level of 72 suggested to the group by the Severn and Wye Energy Agency. There are significant variations between districts with the lowest average SAP of 46 occurring in the Forest of Dean and the highest average of 62 occurring in Tewkesbury (perhaps due to the large number of new builds with high SAP ratings in the area), but the average in every district remains below the minimum recommended level. The relatively large number of dwellings that fail to provide reasonable thermal comfort/adequate heating, and the low energy efficiency ratings of many dwellings, suggest that many people in the county are likely to be experiencing problems with cold and damp housing and that they may find themselves slipping into fuel poverty. In some cases this might in turn mean an increased risk of winter death, particularly for older residents experiencing these conditions.

2.6 The work of the task-group has demonstrated the impact that housing can have on excess winter mortality, but housing can also impact on many other health issues. The important role of housing is recognised within the new Healthy Gloucestershire strategy, which identifies the provision of accessible, healthy and safe housing as a priority area. Given this the task-group suggests that the HOSC should devote some time to examining the Healthy Gloucestershire Strategy, and the housing element of that strategy during 2009.

Recommendation 1 - *That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an overview of the Healthy Gloucestershire Strategy at its meeting in July 2009, and consider taking a more detailed look at proposed action against the accessible, healthy and safe housing element of the strategy at a future meeting as the important role that housing plays in health needs to be recognised.*

3.0 Fuel Poverty

3.1 According to the nationally accepted definition a household is considered to be in fuel poverty if they need to spend more than 10% of their income to achieve

adequate warmth for health and comfort. Based on this definition 4.5 million households in the UK are in fuel poverty. According to the Severn Wye Energy Agency the main factors contributing to fuel poverty are low levels of thermal insulation, and the efficiency or inefficiency of appliances used for heating and hot water. Fuel poverty can lead to discomfort, damp from condensation, fuel debt, ill health, social exclusion, and can contribute to excess winter mortality.

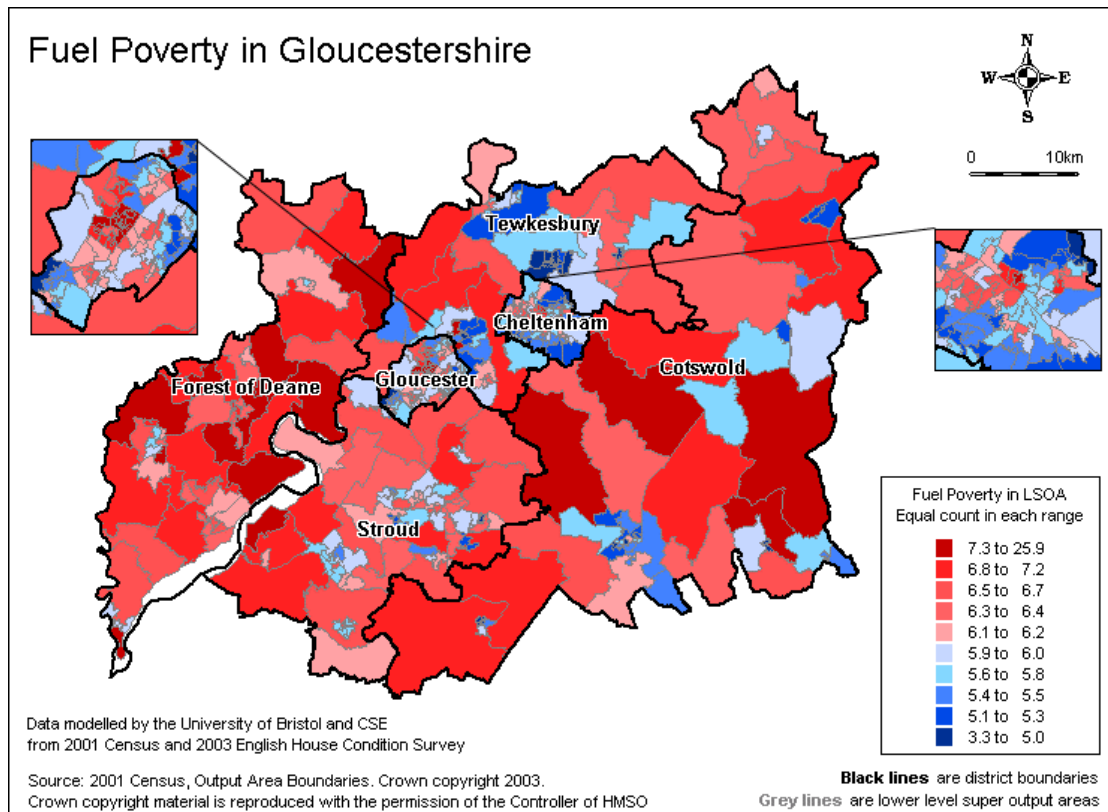
3.2 Recent fuel price rises have exacerbated the problem of fuel poverty. According to the Severn Wye Energy Agency every 1% increase in fuel costs forces 40,000 households into fuel poverty and since 2003 domestic gas prices have risen by 85% and electricity prices have risen by 63%

3.3 The following table, taken from the draft updated Action For Affordable Warmth strategy, and based on data from 2004, shows the extent of fuel poverty in England by Government region. It demonstrates that the area with the highest percentage of households in fuel poverty is the North East (9.5% of households), and the areas with the lowest percentage of households in fuel poverty are London and the South East (both with 3.9% of households), with the South West falling in the middle with 6.2% of households in fuel poverty. In terms of absolute numbers the area with the highest number of fuel poor households is the North West (190,000 households), and the lowest is the East Midlands (101,000 households). The South West has 134,000 households in fuel poverty.

Government Region	% of households in group		Number households in group (1,000's)		Total number of households (1,000s)	% total fuel poor in group
	Not Fuel Poor	Fuel Poor	Not fuel Poor	Fuel Poor		
North East	90.5	9.5	987	103	1,090	8.3
Yorks & Humber	92.3	7.7	1,944	163	2,107	13.2
North West	93.4	6.6	2,675	190	2,865	15.3
East Midlands	94.3	5.7	1,675	101	1,777	8.2
West Midlands	93.0	7.0	2,043	153	2,196	12.4
South West	93.8	6.2	2,033	134	2,166	10.8
East England	93.9	6.1	2,159	141	2,300	11.4
South East	96.1	3.9	3,257	133	3,390	10.7
London	96.1	3.9	2,922	119	3,041	9.6
Total	94.1	5.9	19,695	1,236	20,931	100.0

3.4 The most recent data that the task-group has been able to access on levels of fuel poverty in Gloucestershire dates back to 2003 and suggests that approximately 14,600 households in the county are in fuel poverty. Given the increase in fuel prices since 2003 referred to previously it seems likely that this figure will have increased over the past 5 years, although some of this increase may have been offset by measures taken to improve the energy efficiency of homes. The following map demonstrates the extent of fuel poverty in

Gloucestershire by Local Super Output Area (LSOA). The red areas are the areas with the highest level of fuel poverty.



4.0 Action for Affordable Warmth

4.1 In 2001 Local Authorities in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire agreed a 15-year strategy called Action for Affordable Warmth, which aimed to ensure that all households could enjoy affordable warmth by 2016. Work to deliver the strategy is overseen by the Affordable Warmth Partnership. Members of the task-group were pleased to be able to attend a meeting of the partnership that focused on the issue of excess winter mortality, in the context of the health and social strategy for Gloucestershire.

4.2 The task-group understand that a number of positive actions were taken between 2001 and 2008 to help deliver the strategy. For example the Severn Wye Energy Agency has a benefits advisor in place who can help people ensure that they are accessing all of the financial support to which they are entitled. Also the Warm and Well Scheme has improved approximately 15,000 homes through the installation of loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, or central heating systems, and has provided energy efficiency advice to thousands more households. The task-group understands that part of the support available includes free impartial energy saving advice from the Energy Saving Trust. Feedback from some of the

witnesses suggests that many people are not aware that this free and impartial advice is available, which suggests that more promotional work is needed. The task-group is pleased to note that information about the advice line and Energy Saving Trust website is available on the County Council website as part of the new section focusing on advice on how to cope with recession. However, it may be possible to use other existing information channels to disseminate this information further.

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 Saving Trust.*

4.3 In 2007 the Local Authorities in Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire agreed that the strategy needed to be updated to take into account a number of changes, including the significant rise in fuel prices. The task-group has not seen the final version of the revised strategy but has seen a draft version. As we understand it the revised strategy will include an updated action plan to deliver affordable warmth by 2016. The action plan focuses on 4 key aims:

- Aim 1 – Partnerships and Strategies
 - Objective 1 – To ensure our Partnership involves all relevant organisations and engages with other partners
 - Objective 2 – To ensure all relevant strategies acknowledge issues related to affordable warmth
 - Objective 3 – To access funding and other resources from key partners
 - Objective 4 – To encourage others to use the principle that homes must be affordable to run, not just buy or rent

- Aim 2 – Improve energy efficiency in all housing
 - Objective 1 – To work together to collect and make use of data on the energy efficiency of homes
 - Objective 2 – To improve energy efficiency in existing housing
 - Objective 3 – To involve private landlords
 - Objective 4 – To involve Registered Social Landlords
 - Objective 5 – To promote a high standard of energy efficiency in newly built homes.

- Aim 3 – Provide advice and information
 - Objective 1 – To maintain a co-ordinated approach to energy advice provision relevant to local needs
 - Objective 2 – To integrate income maximisation and energy advice services
 - Objective 3 – To train key people to provide advice

- Objective 4 – To make advice accessible to all
 - Objective 5 – To communicate national data and advice locally
- Aim 4 – Identify and help people at risk of fuel poverty
- Objective 1 – To maintain and develop existing Gloucestershire Warm and Well referral systems
 - Objective 2 – To identify those at risk of fuel poverty
 - Objective 3 – To target homes that present the greatest risk of fuel poverty
 - Objective 4 – To provide the enhanced support and information required to help those most at need.

5.0 The Warm and Well Scheme

5.1 The Warm and Well Scheme was introduced in 2001 alongside the Action for Affordable Warmth Strategy and is a key component in the delivery of the strategy. The scheme is based on a consortium of local authorities in Gloucestershire (plus South Gloucestershire), led by Stroud District Council. The scheme is managed on behalf of the local authorities by the Severn Wye Energy Agency. The scheme has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice and in 2006 was awarded the Ashden Sustainable Energy Award.

5.2 The Warm and Well Scheme aims to improve energy efficiency and reduce health problems associated with cold housing by raising awareness of the issues, providing specific advice to householders, and enabling action to take place to address problems through referrals to grants and discounts. The scheme is included within the Local Area Agreement as a stretch target as discussed later in this report. There are two levels of targets. Level A is what might be achieved without extra effort and investment. Level B is what might be achieved with more effort and investment, and this is called a stretch target. Stretch targets are negotiated and a reward grant is received from central government when achieved.

5.3 Initial funding to develop the scheme was provided by the Government but this is no longer available. Further funding is provided by local authorities for grants to deliver energy efficiency measures (grants are managed through a single grant scheme known as Gloucestershire Energy Efficiency Grants – GEEG. These grants are available to those on low incomes. People on benefits are referred to the national Warm Front scheme, and those considered ‘able to pay’ are offered discounts through a bulk discount scheme), Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust, and fuel suppliers under their Energy Efficiency Commitment programme.

5.4 A large number of energy efficiency measures have been installed as a result of the Warm and Well Scheme since 2001, as shown in the following table. Measures installed include cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, draught proofing, and new condensing boilers. The installation of these measures is often enough to make a non-decent home into a decent home.

District Council	Cheltenham	Cotswold	Forest of Dean	Glos City	Stroud	Tewkesbury	Total
Total number of measures installed	9629	2226	3221	4253	7346	2768	34021
Total number of properties improved	3581	986	1426	1924	3074	1560	12551

5.5 The table shows considerable variation in the number of measures installed in each District Council area. Although some variation should be expected considering the different number of households in each district, it does appear that some of the variation is due to differing levels of funding for the scheme in each area. The following table shows the level of funding from each District Council for the Warm and Well scheme in 2007/8, and an estimate of what this equates to per head of population in that district.

District Council	Spend on Gloucestershire Energy Efficiency Grants 2007/8	Per Capita funding based on ONS 2007 mid-year population estimates
Cheltenham	£420,392	£3.74
Gloucester	£313,539	£2.74
Stroud	£247,949	£2.24
Cotswold	£146,905	£1.75
Forest of Dean	£77,544	£0.95
Tewkesbury	£25,660	£0.32

5.6 The table shows that in 2007/8 there was considerable variation in the level of funding for the scheme, ranging from over £420,000 (£3.74 per head of population) in Cheltenham to £25,660 (£0.32 per head of population) in Tewkesbury. The District Council Household surveys show that there is some variation in the level of need in each district, but the levels of funding in 2007/8 do not appear to be fully reflective of need. For example according to the surveys there are approximately 3213 dwellings in Tewkesbury, and 4034 dwellings in Forest of Dean that do not provide a reasonable level of thermal comfort, which is reasonably comparable with levels in Gloucester (2864), and Cotswolds (3978), yet levels of funding are considerably higher in Gloucester and Cotswolds than in either Tewkesbury or the Forest of Dean. Similarly, Cheltenham has approximately twice as many dwellings that fail to provide a reasonable level of thermal comfort then Tewkesbury, but provides approximately 20 times more funding than Tewkesbury.

Whilst the task-group acknowledges that this is only a very basic comparison, it is concerned by this apparent discrepancy.

- 5.7** The task-group understands that resources are stretched and that funding for the Warm and Well scheme has to compete with many other priority areas. However, the task-group believes that the scheme is extremely valuable and would like to see funding in each area that is proportionate to the level of need in that area. The task-group would therefore encourage the Affordable Warmth Partnership to do all that is can to ensure that all District Councils recognise the value of the scheme and to encourage them to provide funding to the scheme that adequately reflects the level of need in their area.

Recommendation 3 - *That the Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership ensure 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.*

- 5.8** The task-group is aware that there are a large number of homes in Gloucestershire that are considered 'hard to treat' because the conventional methods for improving the energy efficiency of buildings cannot be used (for example homes that do not have cavity walls and so cannot be improved through the introduction of cavity wall insulation). Measures can be taken to improve the energy efficiency of this type of housing, for example through the introduction of internal or external solid wall insulation, but these measures are a lot more expensive and intrusive than the current measures provided through the Warm and Well scheme. The task-group is aware that there are a finite number of homes that can easily be improved through the Warm and Well scheme, and that District Council officers are already considering how the Warm and Well scheme might be developed in future to begin to address the 'hard to treat' homes as the number of easy to treat homes reduces. The task-group welcomes this forward thinking but recognises that this development will come with resource implications due to the cost of installing the more complex measures required to treat this type of home.
- 5.9** The Gloucestershire Warm and Well scheme is not the only scheme that offers people assistance with improving the energy efficiency of their homes. The Government operates the national Warm Front scheme, which offers assistance to people on income or disability related benefits. Anyone on benefits that approaches the Gloucestershire Warm and Well scheme is referred to this national scheme. Fuel suppliers also required to provide their own schemes that provide discounts to help improve the energy efficiency of homes, and they are expected to meet targets set by the Government in relation to the number of measures that they install. Unfortunately the task-group has heard of incidents where residents on low incomes have taken up the discount offered by fuel suppliers and therefore had measures installed at a reduced rate, only to later find that they could have received a grant and therefore had the work done for

free under the Warm and Well scheme. This occurs because fuel suppliers are not required to inform residents that other schemes exist, and so residents may choose to take up the discount offered because they don't realise that there might be a better option available to them. Unless fuel suppliers are required to inform residents that there are other schemes available, which in some circumstances might be a better option, this situation is likely to occur again as fuel suppliers attempt to meet the targets that have been imposed upon them by the Government. The task-group believes that this issue needs to be addressed and suggests that the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee write Lord Hunt, Minister for Sustainable Development and Energy Innovation, requesting that he urgently consider whether any action can be taken to require fuel suppliers to inform residents about the existence of other schemes when they are promoting their own scheme, so that residents can consider which scheme best suits their needs.

Recommendation 4 – *That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee write to the Minister for Sustainable Development and Energy Innovation to request that he urgently consider whether any action can be taken to ensure that fuel suppliers make residents aware of the existence of other energy efficiency schemes when they are promoting their own scheme, so that residents have an opportunity to consider which scheme is best for their needs.*

6.0 Local Area Agreement Targets

6.1 The Gloucestershire Local Area Agreement (LAA) is an agreement between the Government and a partnership of local public and voluntary organisations, led by Gloucestershire County Council through the Gloucestershire Conference. It sets out how local partners will use a range of funding streams to deliver improvements in outcomes for local people. The LAA sets out an agreed set of priorities based around the following 5 themes:

- Children and Young People
- Economic Development and Enterprise
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Natural and Built Environment
- Safer and Stronger Communities

6.2 Each theme contains a range of agreed priorities and associated targets. Within this there are two targets that are relevant to the work of this task-group - LI19 (number of measures installed via the Gloucestershire Warm and Well Scheme) and NI187 (*Tackling fuel poverty – reducing the percentage of people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating*). The task-group has examined progress against both of these indicators.

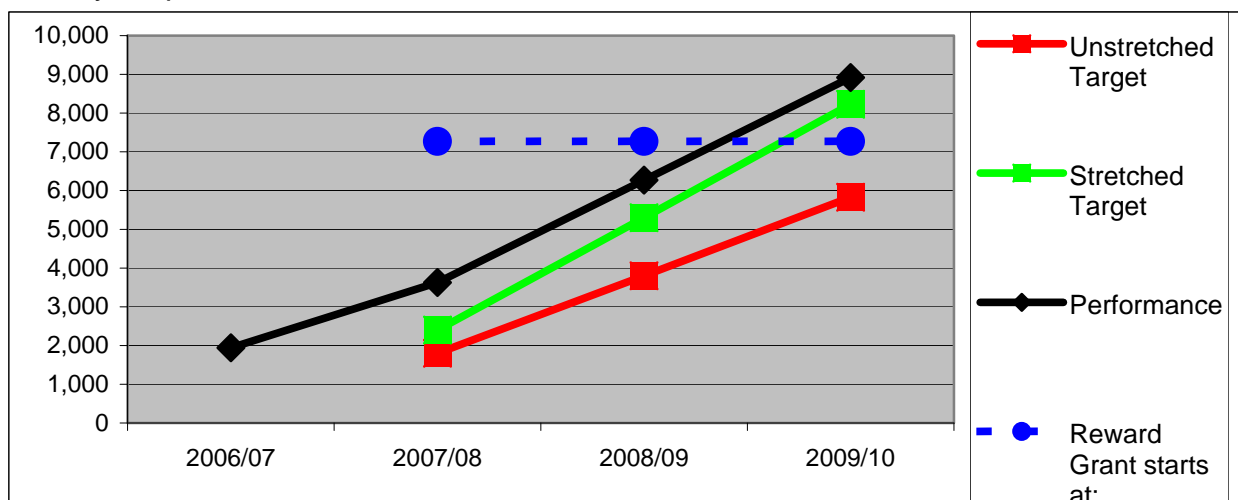
6.3 **NI187** – This is a new target and as such the aim for 2008/9 was to establish a baseline against which progress could be monitored over the next two years. There has been some delay in this as clarification was sought from Government about certain aspects of the target, but this has now been addressed and District

Councils will shortly be undertaking a survey, the results of which will form the basis for establishing the baseline. The task-group understands that a baseline is expected to have been agreed by the end of the financial year as originally planned.

6.3.1 NI187 focuses on tackling fuel poverty amongst people on income related benefits. Whilst this is seen as a positive step the Severn Wye Energy Agency has suggested that it does not go far enough and that we should consider developing a more challenging target locally that aims to tackle fuel poverty wherever it exists. This would help to ensure that those on low and modest incomes are not left behind. The task-group recognises that the Severn Wye Energy Agency may have somewhat of a vested interest in pushing this idea, but is nonetheless inclined to support the idea. The information in the household surveys discussed earlier demonstrates that the vast majority of people living in non-decent housing are not receiving income or disability related benefits. This suggests that there may well be a large number of people on low incomes that are experiencing fuel poverty and who are in as much need of support as people on benefits. Introducing an enhanced target would of course have financial implications.

Recommendation 5 - *That the Gloucestershire Environment Partnership consider developing an advanced target for tackling fuel poverty that goes beyond the requirements of NI 187, with the aim of tackling fuel poverty wherever it exists, not just for households on income related benefits.*

6.4 **LI19** - This target specifically relates to the work of the Warm and Well Scheme. The unstretched target is to install 5,829 measures via Warm and Well over the three years from 2007/8 to 2009/10, and the stretched target is to install 8,229 measures over the same period. There is a reward grant associated with delivering the stretched target. The graph below shows actual and projected performance against this target between 2006/7 and 2009/10, and shows that Gloucestershire is currently performing above both the unstretched and the stretched targets and expects to install a total of 8,917 measures over the three year period.



6.4.1 As demonstrated above Gloucestershire is currently on track to meet the LI19 stretch target and is currently expecting to receive the full reward grant of £1,358,203 that is associated with this. The task-group welcomes the strong performance in this area and hopes that the target will be met as this will help to address the issue of excess winter mortality. The task-group strongly feels that the reward grant associated with LI19 should be used to fund further developments that will increase energy efficiency and reduce the risk of fuel poverty. The task-group believes that if the target is achieved a proportion of the funding should be invested in the Warm and Well scheme to allow it to begin to introduce measures to improve the energy efficiency of 'hard to treat' homes, and that the remainder of the reward grant should be used to help finance the delivery of the enhanced NI187 target referred to in paragraph 6.3.1.

Recommendation 6 – *That the Gloucestershire Environment Partnership consider investing a proportion of the £1,358,203 reward grant that is expected to be received from achieving the LI19 stretched target in the Warm and Well scheme with the specific aim of allowing the scheme to begin to introduce measures to improve the energy efficiency of 'hard to treat' homes.*

Recommendation 7 - *That the Gloucestershire Environment Partnership consider using a proportion of the £1,358,203 reward grant that is expected to be received from achieving the LI19 stretched target to fund delivery against the advanced fuel poverty target referred to in recommendation 5.*

6.5 The task-group has found the opportunity to scrutinise performance against the local area agreement targets that relate to excess winter mortality extremely useful. Discussions are currently underway about options for scrutinising the LAA in Gloucestershire more widely, but the task-group understands that no firm plans have yet been developed for taking this forward. The task-group believes that suitable arrangements scrutinising the LAA need to be developed, and suggests that the HOSC is well placed to begin to scrutinise the health related elements set out in the Healthier Communities and Older People Block of the LAA as soon as possible.

Recommendation 8 - *That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor performance against the health related targets set out in the Healthier Communities and Older People block of the LAA on an ongoing basis from the beginning of the 2009/10 financial year.*

6.6 Given the interest that the HOSC has shown in the issue of excess winter mortality the task-group also suggests that the HOSC scrutinise performance against LI19 and NI187 from the Natural and Built Environment Block on an ongoing basis. This will allow the HOSC to monitor whether the LI19 stretch target is achieved as expected, and also whether an enhanced NI187 target is developed as recommended by this task-group.

Recommendation 9 - *That in addition to monitoring the Healthier Communities and Older People block of the LAA the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee also monitor progress against targets LI19 and NI187 from the Natural and Built Environment block of the LAA on an ongoing basis from the beginning of the 2009/10 financial year.*

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1** The household surveys indicate that there are a large number of houses in the county that do not provide adequate thermal insulation, and average SAP ratings are well below the recommended Government minimum. This suggests that many people will be experiencing problems with cold and damp housing, which can exacerbate various health problems and can also result in increased levels of winter mortality.
- 7.2** The task-group is pleased to note that a considerable amount of work is currently being done to address problems with cold and damp housing, particularly through the Warm and Well scheme, and that Gloucestershire is on target to achieve the LAA stretch target relating to the provision of energy efficiency measures. From a HOSC point of view it is also pleasing to note the positive feedback that the task-group has received about the Primary Care Trust's commitment to the Warm and Well scheme.
- 7.3** Due to the relatively low levels of excess winter mortality in Gloucestershire, and the considerable effort that is already being made to ensure that people are able to enjoy affordable warmth, the task-group has only made a small number of recommendations within this report. Nonetheless we hope that these recommendations will be seriously considered, and that they will help to address the issue of excess winter mortality. In order to ensure that the recommendations are taken forward the task-group suggests that a detailed response to each recommendation should be requested and presented to the HOSC in September 2009. The task-group also believes that the HOSC should monitor changes in the levels of excess winter mortality, on an ongoing annual basis in order to ensure that progress towards reducing the levels of excess winter mortality is being made.
- 7.4** It is understood that all of the recommendations of the task-group will be reviewed and reported upon after 6, 12 and 18 months in accordance with the Scrutiny Monitoring Process.

Recommendation 10 – *That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that a detailed response setting out action being taken against each of the task-group's recommendations should be sought and that the responses should be presented to the HOSC in September 2009.*

Recommendation 11 – *That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor levels of excess winter mortality on an ongoing annual basis as part of its work plan in order to establish whether progress is being made towards reducing the levels of excess winter mortality.*

ITEM 9

Section 4 – Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation	Responsible Organisation
<p><u>Recommendation 1</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an overview of the Healthy Gloucestershire Strategy at its meeting in July 2009, and consider taking a more detailed look at proposed action against the accessible, healthy and safe housing element of the strategy at a future meeting as the important role that housing plays in health needs to be recognised</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 2</u> <i>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 Saving Trust.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 3</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership ensure 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.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Affordable Warmth Partnership</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 4</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee write to the Minister for Sustainable Development and Energy Innovation to request that he urgently consider whether any action can be taken to ensure that fuel suppliers make residents aware of the existence of other energy efficiency schemes when they are promoting their own scheme, so that residents have an opportunity to consider which scheme is best for their needs.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>

<p><u>Recommendation 5</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Environment Partnership consider developing an advanced target for tackling fuel poverty that goes beyond the requirements of NI 187, with the aim of tackling fuel poverty wherever it exists, not just for households on income related benefits.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Environment Partnership</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 6</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Environment Partnership consider investing a proportion of the £1,358,203 reward grant that is expected to be received from achieving the LI19 stretched target in the Warm and Well scheme with the specific aim of allowing the scheme to begin to introduce measures to improve the energy efficiency of 'hard to treat' homes.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Environment Partnership</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 7</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Environment Partnership consider using a proportion of the £1,358,203 reward grant that is expected to be received from achieving the LI19 stretched target to fund delivery against the advanced fuel poverty target referred to in recommendation 5.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Environment Partnership</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 8</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor performance against the health related targets set out in the Healthier Communities and Older People block of the LAA on an ongoing basis from the beginning of the 2009/10 financial year.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>

<p><u>Recommendation 9</u> <i>That in addition to monitoring the Healthier Communities and Older People block of the LAA the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee also monitor progress against targets LI19 and NI187 from the Natural and Built Environment block of the LAA on an ongoing basis from the beginning of the 2009/10 financial year.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 10</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree that a detailed response setting out action being taken against each of the task-group's recommendations should be sought and that the responses should be presented to the HOSC in September 2009.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>
<p><u>Recommendation 11</u> <i>That the Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitor levels of excess winter mortality on an ongoing annual basis as part of its work plan in order to establish whether progress is being made towards reducing the levels of excess winter mortality.</i></p>	<p>Gloucestershire Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>