

## Luton Borough Council

### Luton, Bedfordshire, England



### Organisation description

Luton Borough Council is a Local Authority managing 8,500 homes, representing 13.6% of the total housing stock in the Borough

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### Strategy

The bulk of their strategy is to bring together as much as possible the 'partnership approach' which includes the local authority, public & private housing, health service, voluntary organisations, schools and an 'Action Zone' - so word of mouth, awareness raising and training is heavily focussed upon. The Fuel Poverty strategy is linked into other corporate strategies across the council. The extent of the problem is understood as estimations on the number of households that are at risk of being in fuel poverty. These are broken down into ward areas, and social housing stock is profiled using 'NHER' software

#### *Future Perspective*

LBC propose to provide a domestic renewable energy grant scheme with a focus to reduce fuel poverty in the future

## Identifying and reaching energy poor

### *Detection focus on 'building' features*

- Luton Borough Council (LBC) has developed an Energy Profile of housing stock using 'NHER' and SAP data collection. They aim to monitor progress of data collection to ensure targets are met and profile data is up to date
- LBC propose to establish a database of Registered Social Landlord stock to include indicators of thermal efficiency
- They also propose to research indicators for affordability
- LBC recently undertook aerial thermal imaging of all buildings in Luton. Infrared imaging was captured and applied to an Ordnance Survey Map. The average heat value was calculated and each property was then shaded from red to blue according to how much heat was lost. The data is then provided to organisation and partners in order to determine which homes are most in need of insulation
- LBC conducts a social housing 'Stock Condition Survey' in order to investigate whether they meet the 'Decent Homes Standards' of 'thermal comfort' in a 'reasonable state of repair' and has 'reasonable modern facilities and services'

### *Detection which include 'occupants' situation*

- As part of the Affordable Warmth strategy, work to address fuel poverty is linked with wider objectives to address poverty and social exclusion within the whole of Luton

## Communications, awareness and advice

### *Awareness which includes both 'buildings' and 'occupants'*

- LBC have developed 'Winter Warmer' packs to be distributed to vulnerable householders, which includes information and advice, hypothermia thermometers and other promotional products to help enable warmth

### *Awareness focussed on 'occupants' situation*

- LBC have been awarded 'Beacon' Status for 'an effective mechanism for getting advice and information to residents who need it'. The Affordable Warmth strategy has been integrated into Luton's Social Inclusion strategy
- LBC have given training in energy efficiency to community members
- Regular articles concerning energy efficiency appear in council and health newsletters, and local press
- Regular 'Energy Matters' newsletters are also disseminated to householders
- A survey has been carried out at a 'Luton Against Fuel Poverty Forum' regarding affordable warmth awareness
- LBC have approached the staff of the local Energy Efficiency Advice Centre to provide advice at community centres and at the local Citizens Advice Bureau
- LBC propose to disseminate quarterly newsletters regarding energy efficiency
- An 'Energy Bus' has been proposed to tour the Luton area during national 'Energy Efficiency Week' providing promotional packs, activities and information for fuel poor households
- Energy efficiency information is provided in different formats with consideration for literacy and language issues
- Information regarding energy efficiency is also provided in community centres and other public facility

areas

- Tenants are provided with information regarding switching energy suppliers
- LBC has a Tenant Participation Team, which encourages tenants to get involved in The Tenants Consultative Committee, Tenant & Residents' Association and other such groups, in order to voice their opinions, concerns and contribute to decision making with regards to fuel poverty
- As part of the Affordable Warmth strategy energy efficiency referral system, an Affordable Warmth support worker has been employed through social services to provide home visits to households referred onto the system in order to assist them in becoming energy efficient

## Choice of retrofit technologies

### *Choice focussed on 'building' features*

- LBC intends to review current work programmes to incorporate energy efficiency measures to improve stock profile
- They currently assess all properties with an NHER rating of less than 4 and direct funds accordingly
- LBC has improved the efficiency of households with SAP value of 30 or less. Almost all of those households have been eliminated

### *Choice which includes both 'buildings' and 'occupants'*

- A pilot scheme has been set up to offer housing association tenants, who are just above benefit level, free insulation
- Energy efficiency measures for housing association households are currently incorporated into housing grants programmes, but they also aim to incorporate such measures into other grant schemes such as Disability Facility Grant schemes
- All housing association energy efficiency measures carried out are based on the most suitable and cost effective for each household
- As part of the Affordable Warmth strategy, LBC have developed a referral scheme, which aims to make homes more energy efficient, increase income and establish social support. Referrals are made by local organisations for example, home carers, housing benefit officers, and health visitors. Resulting from this referral scheme are referrals onto the 'Warm Front' grants system. For those in the private sector who do not qualify for the 'Warm Front' grant, but have an income of less than £12,000 and claim certain income-related benefits can access the local 'Cosy Homes' scheme, which provides insulation measures through an in-house grant programme to fuel poor households. There is also a 'Healthy Heating' scheme which provides heating improvements for householders at risk of cold-related illnesses

## Finance

- LBC plan to increase future spending priorities into energy efficiency measures. They propose to investigate potential for new partners to provide additional energy efficiency funding
- Establish links with fuel companies and with energy consultants for further funding in energy improvement works
- LBC aim to encourage Registered Social Landlords who are improving their stock to investigate possible funding for thermal energy efficiency measures
- Funding has been secured for Luton Housing Associations (HA) to carry out home improvement measures for tenants most in need

## Skills and training

- Over 350 representatives from council departments and community groups have received training in issues of fuel poverty. LBC staff including Grant Officers, as well as staff from the National Health Service Trust, voluntary sector, and community members have trained in energy efficiency and have gained a City & Guilds qualification in 'Energy Awareness'. Training is also made available for tenant representatives in the committee
- In the near future, LBC intend to extend energy efficiency training to Registered Social Landlord staff
- LBC intend to train mentioned staff in Welfare Rights advice also
- They have also appointed a Corporate Energy Manager who has the responsibility of developing an energy management strategy for the Council's social housing stock
- LBC are part of an initiative which targets young people between the ages of 16 to 19 years who are regarded as 'NEET' (not in education, employment or training) and train them in energy efficiency. They would sit a 12 week training programme that would award them with a City & Guilds in 'Insulation'. This was a platform for these young people to re-enter employment or gain valuable work experience to empower them to address their employment situation. This initiative also contributed to increasing referrals to energy improvement within the housing stock
- All referral organisations receive free 'Energy Awareness' training and guidance

## Monitoring and evaluation

- The 'Energy Matters' newsletters seek views and feedback to the quality of the newsletters and also to the quality of energy efficiency work carried out
- An Affordable Warmth website has been created with opportunities for members of the public to feedback, comment on site, and learn about ongoing fuel poverty work in Luton
- National Energy Services completed an energy review of LBCs social housing stock and found that they were continually improving the efficiency of these buildings
- Progress of the Affordable Warmth strategy is being monitoring and reviewed by the Affordable Warmth Strategy Steering Group, who meet up every quarter to update the original strategy
- As part of the referral system for energy efficiency improvement works, feedback is taken from the local organisations who make the referrals, and logged in order to have access to the status of any given energy efficiency improvement works