

Newark & Sherwood District Council Nottinghamshire, East Midlands, England



Organisation description

Newark and Sherwood District Council is in the county of Nottinghamshire, within the region of the East Midlands, England. Newark and Sherwood Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), which was set up with effect from November 2004 to manage 5,845 Council Houses on behalf of the Council.

Contact details

01636 655 598

<http://www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk/>

Strategy

Originally managed and focussed on councils own housing stock but later brought into the district to include all housing sectors and managed by the local authorities Energy Agency. The strategy primary focused on targeting dwellings that fit into 'vulnerable' categories by raising general awareness, targeting vulnerable persons and identifying dwelling that are likely to present a risk of fuel poverty Partnerships working including Primary Health Care Trust, local authority and other stakeholder organisations. Levels of fuel poverty are understood throughout the district

Future Perspective

As part of the 'Awareness Programme for Policy Makers in Energy Efficiency in Low income housing' (APPEEL), a study was set up to establish the potential of a local Energy Service Company to secure best-deal energy tariffs and provide soft loans for energy efficiency investments

The Council have set up a pilot project for 'hard to heat' homes, in which they aim to install Micro Combined

Heat & Power and solar thermal panels into Council owned dwellings, commencing in 2011

Identifying and reaching energy poor

Detection focus on 'building' features

- A European wide comparative study of low-income housing in Newark & Sherwood (N&S) and other such European district councils through APPEEL', which showed that 11.3% of N&S householders were in fuel poverty in 2001/02
- As part of APPEEL, the Council wants to make all dwellings 'Capable of Delivering Affordable Energy' (CODAE) to the most vulnerable householders
- An SAP Stock Profile has been established to determine CODAE by a minimum SAP of 60
- RSL landlords within N&S District are asked for their dwellings energy performance data

Detection which includes both 'buildings' and 'occupants'

- In 2002, the N&S undertook a statistical sampled 'Housing Stock Condition Survey' to establish how many householders were in fuel poverty within the whole of the district
- The Council's 100% energy performance database (MAXIM) provides energy data of most dwellings
- They calculate the 'total energy target' annually through producing postal surveys for every dwelling in the district so as to estimate the running costs and therefore identify dwellings which are at risk of fuel poverty if those dwellings are occupied by vulnerable households. More than 13,000 dwellings have sufficient data to undertake an annual fuel bill cost to vulnerable householder groups. Plans are in place to have this 'dwelling fuel poverty risk assessment' available to all dwellings
- Information gathered is then placed on the Council's electronic map (GIS) for statistical management
- A 'Dwelling Affordable Energy Target' was set up to monitor fuel poverty within the Council's own housing stock
- N&S Energy Agency (EA) conducts Housing Condition Surveys for every household once every 5 years concerning energy issues, which identifies whether or not a household is in fuel poverty
- The EA has set up an energy performance database
- A Council House survey following central heating installations demonstrated that 40% of the Council Housing stock has at least one pre-payment meter, which incurs an additional estimated 6% cost for fuel
- An energy audit analysis of the housing stock assumes a 'dual fuel standard credit tariff'

Communications, awareness and advice

Awareness which includes both 'buildings' and 'occupants'

- N&S have been awarded 'Beacon' status as a result of their focus on tackling fuel poverty, which is part of their Community Strategy
- Within the APPEEL project a pilot study was undertaken, which focussed on tenants' energy awareness within the 200 most energy inefficient dwellings and it found significant weaknesses regarding tenant householder education, advice and guidance
- As part of the APPEEL funding, an 'Energy Advice Training Manual' has been developed with PowerPoint presentations
- A separate draft 'Tenants Energy Advice Handbook' has been prepared
- The Council is standardising heating system controls so as to be user friendly
- The Council conduct energy surveys with energy and income maximisation home visits

- N&S conducts annual postal energy surveys for households to complete and return. These are sent to approximately 7,500 householders in targeted locations between November and March each year. The data is collated and the householders are then sent a 'Key Measures' energy advice pack. Following from this, another postal survey is sent to 2,500 householders in April each year, and again these householders are sent a 'Key Measures' pack. It took six years to gain information from all owner-occupied and private landlord dwellings in this rolling programme. They have since proposed to gain all returns of postal surveys within every 4 years. For householders who do not return surveys, they are then subject to 'walk-past' energy surveys

Awareness focussed on 'occupants' situation

- The Council sends out 'energy advice and education' leaflets to over 10,000 households per annum. Information is also displayed in public areas such as Council offices and public facility centres
- The Council produce articles and adverts regarding energy issues within its biannual newsletters to residents. Householders are also contacted by letter as well as via the internet. They also hire an 'Energy Advice' bus which tours the district with emphasis on rural locations
- The Council actively encourage tenants to get involved in service improvements in a variety of ways, one such scheme is known as 'Housing Matters'. Also a 'Residents Involvement Strategy' and a 'Monitoring Group' has been set up, which is chaired by tenants and involves tenants and officers from the Council. The aim of the groups for Repairs and Maintenance, and, Housing Management, is to look at present policy and procedure and suggest ways in which services can be enhanced. There is also a Tenants and Residents Association, groups, forums, and other community groups that residents can get involved in to discuss issues of affordable warmth and fuel poverty
- The EA provide tenants with fuel price comparison information, energy advice, and promote discounts and grants for energy efficient measures and products. They also undertake 20 community presentations each year and provide householders with utility advice literature, which includes utility meter reading information, given to them by energy suppliers
- The EA runs an annual 'Energy Week' to promote energy efficiency to all householders of N&S and it proposes to submit articles regarding fuel poverty to the local media

Choice of retrofit technologies

Choice focus on 'building' features

- The Council's Housing stock have been part of a rolling programme 'Energy Strategy' set up in 1985, which invested in insulation, ventilation and heating improvements alongside providing householder energy advice, dealing with the most energy inefficient properties first
- A 2003 survey of the 200 most energy inefficient Council owned dwellings identifies significant energy saving opportunities
- The same survey showed that of 178 most energy inefficient Council owned dwellings 10.5% of them have 1 or 2 pre-paid metres, which is an expensive method for paying for fuel
- The Council have undertaken a cost effective insulation improvement programme and a £1m per annum heating upgrade programme for Council owned dwellings
- In order to tackle 'hard to treat' homes, cost-effective insulation and high efficiency central heating systems are installed instead of costly external or internal insulation, which funding could not budget for

Choice focus on 'occupants' situation

- From funding from the 'Energy Efficiency Investment Programme', during 2001/02 they surveyed and provide Action Plans for affordable warmth and provide energy and income maximisation advice to the remaining Council dwellings that do not meet fuel poverty targets

Finance

- N&S has been implementing a 20 year social housing capital 'Energy Efficiency Investment Programme' of £16.4m since 1988
- Funding for N&S District's Fuel Poverty strategy and Action Plan has come from the 1992 Department of Environment DOE Greenhouse SCA funding and also from DOE Partnership SCA financing
- Funding has been taken from the Beacon Status, Primary Health Trust, and Social Services for project work
- EA has secured funding from the Energy Saving Trust and third party funding from Europe
- The EA has 2.8 staff and allocated 1.5 staff to 'residential' sustainable energy issues with an expenses budget of £12,900 for the Home Energy Conservation Act. The Fuel Poverty allocation of these budgets is set as 128 days per year with an expenses budget of £1,300
- EA has been exploring the idea of 'Energy Improvement Mortgages' and funding for energy efficient investment for low income householders not eligible for government grants
- An insulation improvement programme for Council Owned Social housing-for-rent sector is largely complete and a £1m per annum heating upgrade programme is underway
- European funding has been secured to support small Registered Social Landlords with no in-house technical support
- Funding is also made available by the health sector, in that they have contributed £6750 in supporting fuel poverty initiative targeting the elderly as there are an estimated 3,000 elderly householders in N&S who are in fuel poverty. In one part of the N&S, they have linked National Health Service monies to keeping patients out of hospital, as a 4-day stay in hospital pays for a central heating system
- There is utility grant assistance (CERT) in energy efficient measures, targeted at the fuel poor. The amount that is received depends on the financial and benefits situation of the individual householder

Skills and training

- The City & Guilds 'Energy Awareness' training and qualification in energy efficiency and condensation is required by all Council Housing staff
- EA has provided training in energy advice to front line staff of health, social, welfare and voluntary sector
- EA is supporting Registered Social Landlord staff in fuel poverty awareness training
- Training is also made available for householders as part of becoming an elected Member, as part of the Tenant Federation and in becoming a tenant activist

Monitoring and evaluation

- As a result of the Council's housing stock rolling programme investment in energy efficient measures and the provision of energy advice, by April 2001, the Council has increased the average SAP rating from 23 to 63.4, with 92.6% of Council dwellings capable of delivering affordable energy