

Fuel Poverty Strategy
Cheshire West and Chester Council
January 2023

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Foreword

I am delighted to share our new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Cheshire West and Chester; our long-term plan to tackle fuel poverty that impacts residents of our borough. This strategy builds on the legacy of our previous Affordable Warmth action plan and is closely aligned with our strategies on Fairer Futures and Inclusive Economy. Again, we want to put the voices of those with first-hand experience of Fuel Poverty at the heart of our approach.

Collaboration is key to tackling fuel poverty and we have worked closely with a range of external stakeholders who have provided valuable input to our strategy.

The Coronavirus has had a major impact on our lives and the cost-of-living crisis and rising energy prices has widened inequalities across the borough. Whilst there are varying figures to tell us how much energy costs may rise; we know that the energy price cap has already increased in 2022 and is set to increase again later this year.

Fuel poverty is an issue affecting millions of homes across the county. Within our borough the most up to date official statistics from June 2020 indicate the fuel poverty level to be at 11.9 per cent, which equates to 18,093 households. This is unacceptable, and with this new Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, we will build upon the success of work to date, listen to the voices of the people experiencing fuel poverty and work collaboratively with partners to tackle the current levels of fuel poverty we are experiencing within our borough.

The Council carried forwards a Notice of Motion earlier in the year to recognise that more must be done to end fuel poverty by 2030. Our revised Fuel Poverty Strategy is aligned to the national Fuel Poverty Strategy for England to ensure our aims and ambitions meet current legislation. It has also been written to compliment other relevant Council plans and strategies such as the Fairer Futures Strategy, Climate Emergency Response Plan and the Health and Well-Being Strategy. This is to ensure the strategy is not viewed in isolation as the issues relating to fuel poverty cut across many council functions, requiring cross-team responses.

As a local authority we play a pivotal role in reducing the fuel poverty level across our borough and aligning this with key priorities in the Council Plan. Our focus includes helping to improve inefficient properties, providing advice and guidance on

how to use energy within the home more efficiently and supporting those in low-income households to become more financially secure. Working with partner organisations and people with lived experience of fuel poverty, has provided us with the knowledge and expertise to shape this strategy and provided a plan for us to identify and help those most in need.

Our vision is to drive a significant reduction in the number of people in the borough experiencing fuel poverty and its range of effects. However, we know that measuring our progress in achieving this is not easy.

We know that addressing fuel poverty is a national issue and is multi-faceted. Yet there are actions we can take locally to make impact and create change. In line with the Council's Climate Change vision, we are aiming to tackle fuel poverty as far as possible by 2030.

We also know that fuel poverty is not just about energy costs and cold homes. It is very connected to our priorities on:

- The wider poverty and health agenda
- Fairer futures strategy
- Inclusive economy strategy
- Working with and supporting our partners, such as the NHS

From engagement with our internal and external stakeholders, we have brought together a strategy which aims to tackle fuel poverty holistically. This means not seeing areas such as increased risk of death, rising energy costs and mental health impacts as separate factors. It means looking at these together to better understand them, assess where we are and create change. We will learn from and work with our communities to tackle fuel poverty together.

Councillor Matt Bryan

Cabinet Member for Housing, Planning and Climate Emergency

Executive Summary

Fuel poverty is a significant challenge that will affect many of our residents. It is closely linked with:

- Energy efficiency of homes
- Debt and household income
- Health and wellbeing

In 2014 Government introduced legislation to improve the energy efficiency of as many 'fuel poor' homes as reasonably practical by 2030, to a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band C. This refers to the measure of the overall energy efficiency of a home, with A being the most efficient.

Our previous Affordable Warmth Action Plan was developed in partnership with local organisations and has been the basis for bringing together our revised strategy, in conjunction with our internal and external stakeholders.

Our key priorities

There are four key issues, inspired by the Council Plan, which this strategy will help to address:

1. Tackling the climate emergency
2. Supporting children and young people to get the best start in life and achieve their full potential
3. Enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives
4. Empowering our communities to help tackle fuel poverty

Our approach

The way we approach the issue of fuel poverty across the borough will continue to evolve. Working together with our communities and partners, our focus is on developing effective and collaborative working practices. This will help to ensure that as a borough we continue to raise awareness of the issues surrounding fuel poverty, offer training to all frontline staff and give a voice to those who can provide 'lived-experience' to ensure our approach is inclusive. We want to ensure that our diverse communities can take all possible opportunities to use external funding to improve

the energy efficiency of cold, damp homes. This will make a significant positive impact on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Action areas

Our action areas have been developed with our stakeholders and seek to address five key themes around fuel poverty:

1. Reducing debt and maximising household income
2. Improving residents' health and wellbeing by tackling cold-related illness
3. Improving the energy efficiency of homes
4. Increasing renewable and low carbon technology in domestic properties
5. Encouraging behaviour change to reduce energy consumption

To achieve the actions, we need to work with our communities and partners to create positive, measurable impact.

How has this strategy been developed?

Over the last five months, we have been working closely with partners to develop the action areas in the strategy. In July 2022, officers from the Council ran discussion groups with key stakeholders such as social housing providers, NHS and community energy leaders to discuss and develop priorities, approach, best practice and key challenges.

This strategy is also closely linked with other Council engagements such as:

- The Inclusive Economy Consultation, which sought views on an inclusive economy strategy to reduce levels of deprivation and poverty and increase life expectancy across the borough. You can find more out more information by visiting: <https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/inclusive-economy>
- The Fairer Future Engagement which sought views on a poverty strategy to tackle the root causes and consequences of hardship and poverty in the

borough. You can find more out more information by visiting:

<https://participatenow.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/fairer-future>

Contributions from this engagement will inform our vision of tackling the Fuel Poverty crisis in the borough. We will produce an updated action plan which will highlight the key issues for the Council and partners to focus on.

This is a long-term vision for the borough. The conversation around fuel poverty will not end with the closing of this engagement. There will be more opportunities to get involved in the future and we welcome this.

Introduction

In England the Government introduced a new definition of fuel poverty in 2021. Referred to as the 'Low Income Low Energy Efficiency' (LILEE) definition of fuel poverty, it defines a household as fuel poor if:

- They are living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G. More specifically, they have a fuel poverty rating (FPEER) of Band D or below.
- Their disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) would be below the poverty line (households with income below 60% of the median income). This means that when someone spends the required amount to heat their home, they are left with an income below the official poverty line.

The situation many residents find themselves in, regarding heating their homes to an adequate temperature, has a direct effect on both their physical and mental health. This can result in long-term problems such as mental illness, social exclusion, stroke, coronary heart problems, respiratory illness, and in more severe cases, death. Excess winter death levels can be attributed to living in a cold and damp home.

The number of households experiencing fuel poverty is rising at the moment for several reasons:

- The cost of energy keeps increasing, which means we need to spend more of our income on paying these bills
- Many of us live in draughty homes, from which lots of heat escapes, and rely on heating systems that are old and inefficient. And because we do not have much money to spare, it is difficult to make our homes more energy efficient, which would reduce our bills
- The general cost of living is rising which means additional strains on paying general bills

Risk factors for Fuel Poverty

NEA (National Energy Action) has identified two areas of risk factors which may increase the likelihood of being in fuel poverty;

1. The Property; the nature and location of the property itself can be factors influencing whether a household is fuel poor. Factors include:

- Older properties
- Size
- Lack of insulation
- Solid walls
- Tenure
- Location/off-gas
- Efficiency of heating system

2. The Householder; the health and status of the householder(s) can be factors in influencing whether a household is fuel poor. Factors include:

- High fuel costs
- Income
- Unemployment
- Attitudes and beliefs
- Multi-person households
- Age
- Health
- Single person

National Policy on Fuel Poverty

In Sustainable Warmth – Protecting Vulnerable Households In England (2021), the government set out principles to guide Central Government policy on tackling fuel poverty:

- prioritise the least efficient homes
- adopt a cost-effective approach
- consider how best to support vulnerable households
- join up fuel poverty policies with wider government priorities (such as achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050).

In addition to work towards homes being EPC Band C by 2030, the government have laid down interim milestones (contained in the 2015 fuel poverty strategy):

- As many fuel-poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band E by 2020
- As many fuel-poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band D by 2025.

Impacts of Fuel Poverty

The impacts of fuel poverty span many areas. Primarily, the impact of fuel poverty can have severe and long-lasting effects on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Many of the potential impacts are linked with other conditions. It is important to think about how mental health conditions can be exacerbated by physical health conditions and vice versa.

1. Potential physical health impacts:

- Heart attacks/strokes
- Respiratory conditions such as influenza or COVID-19
- Poorer nutrition
- Carbon monoxide poisoning
- Hypothermia
- Trips and falls
- Slower recovery from conditions/surgery

2. Potential mental health impacts

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Worsening of existing conditions

In addition, residents might face difficulties in interacting with the energy market/managing their energy such as missing payments, disengagement with services, struggling to understand complex tariffs and self-disconnection from pre-payment meters.

Our Approach

The Fuel Poverty Strategy is guided by principles which are central to our approach and delivery. They are part of our long-term strategic commitment and guide how we have shaped the strategy:

- Collaboration; An external stakeholder group, the voluntary and community sector and a wide range of local partner organisations have been engaged in the development process.
- Co-production; By engaging with key stakeholders early in the process for this strategy, we have been able to challenge existing ideas, learn about best practice and understand what does not work. We have been able to learn from and share knowledge with our stakeholders and work together to produce the strategy.
- Lived experience; We have been able to hear stories from our communities of how their lives have been affected by fuel poverty. We will carry on seeking such examples as we progress so that we can learn from them.
- Evidence based; We have used available quantitative and qualitative data to inform the strategy and shape action areas.
- Action and impact focused; Our strategy is visionary but will be accompanied with a clear action plan and measures of progress

Developing the Fuel Poverty Strategy

There are four key priorities, inspired by the Council Plan, which this strategy will help to address:

1. Tackling the climate emergency
2. Supporting children and young people to get the best start in life and achieve their full potential
3. Enabling more adults to live longer, healthier and happier lives
4. Empowering our communities to help tackle fuel poverty

1. Tackling the climate emergency

Fuel poverty is closely linked to the climate emergency. Emissions from homes make up 14% of the emissions of the borough, making housing one of the biggest carbon emitters.

Poorly insulated homes are a key factor when addressing fuel poverty. There is a need to identify and apply to all available funding opportunities to enable retrofit insulation and clean heating technology schemes to be undertaken. This applies to all domestic properties regardless of whether they are privately owned, social housing tenants or private rental tenants. This will have the benefit of improving the energy efficiency of a home across all tenures, reducing domestic carbon emissions, helping to lower fuel bills, and improving the health and well-being of some of our most vulnerable residents.

There are also significant benefits of being able to provide 'Net Zero' homes. Work is ongoing to make them more accessible, working within the Planning Framework to encourage sustainable development as best practice across the borough.

2. Children and young people will be supported to get the best start in life and achieve their full potential

Fuel poverty directly impacts the mental and physical wellbeing of children and young people. Effects on infants are largely concerned with weight gain, nutritional status, and susceptibility to illness. For children effects are largely on respiratory health. By contrast, among teenagers effects are primarily on mental health, with significant associations between experience of fuel poverty and multiple mental health risk.

Voices from our communities have told us that fuel poverty can be associated with reduced school performance, a poorer diet and effects on mental health.

Evidence suggests that for teenagers there are multiple mental health risks. Living in a cold home is also associated with poor educational performance among children, partly due to higher rates of sickness and absence from school

Young people experiencing fuel poverty are estimated to be:

- More likely than others to experience mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety.
- More likely to experience slower physical growth and cognitive development.
- Have higher risks of respiratory problems, long term ill health and disability.
- Between 1.5 and 3 times more likely to develop symptoms of asthma than children living in warm and dry homes.

3. Adults will be enabled to live longer, healthier and happier lives

Cold homes have been associated with reduced mobility, lower strength and dexterity and exacerbated symptoms of arthritis, which can all increase the risk of falls and unintentional injury. Cold conditions can exacerbate existing medical

conditions including diabetes, certain types of ulcers and musculoskeletal pains. In addition, cold homes may slow down recovery following discharge from hospital. Improvements in the warmth of the home could reduce absences from work, which is likely to have a positive impact on work-related health.

Older people may be particularly vulnerable during cold periods. Research suggests cold temperatures can cause blood pressure to rise in older people, increasing the risk of strokes and other circulatory problems. A study found a relationship between the energy efficiency of the home and winter respiratory symptoms among older people. Finally, a population-based study looking at vulnerability to winter mortality in older people in Britain found around a 30% increase in mortality in winter among people aged 75 years or older; cold homes are likely to contribute to this figure.

4. Our communities will be empowered to help tackle fuel poverty

We have worked closely with our colleagues involved in similar strategies such as Inclusive Economies and Fairer Futures. Through this, we have been able to hear some of the voices of lived experience. We will be engaging with our communities further of the next few months.

We know that our communities are key to tackling fuel poverty. Key community points such as foodbanks currently provide a vital and trusted resource. Our communities need similar links to energy advice in community hub spots including training being provided to deliver advice.

Fuel Poverty in Cheshire West and Chester

What is the situation locally?

The latest official figures show fuel poverty across the borough to be at 11.9% of all households, which equates to 18,093 households.

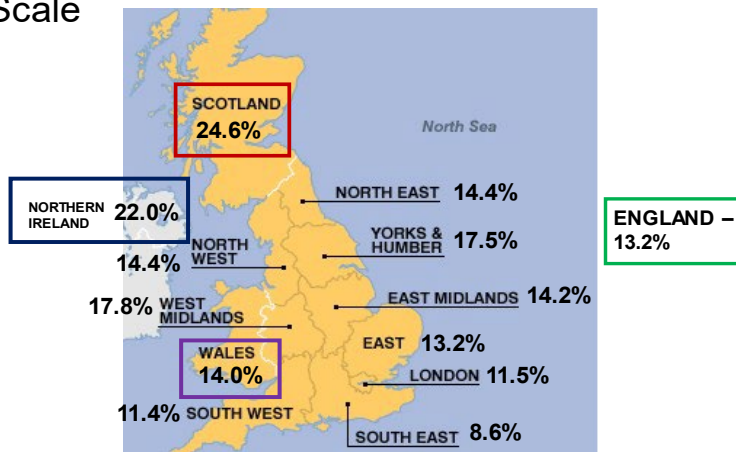
The table below illustrates how fuel poverty levels have changed over the last nine reporting years.

| Year | Fuel poverty level | Total fuel poor households | Total households |
|------|--------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 2012 | 9.40% | 13,081 | 139,867 |
| 2013 | 8.90% | 12,823 | 144,489 |
| 2014 | 10.00% | 14,461 | 143,904 |
| 2015 | 10.10% | 14,627 | 144,311 |
| 2016 | 11.30% | 16,493 | 146,577 |
| 2017 | 10.90% | 16,179 | 148,106 |
| 2018 | 10.60% | 15,769 | 148,163 |
| 2019 | 12.00% | 17,869 | 149,439 |
| 2020 | 11.09% | 18,093 | 151,676 |

This table summarises the data for the last nine reporting years to show the year, fuel poverty level, total fuel poor households and total households. It shows the 2020 fuel poverty level at 11.9%, compared to 9.40% in 2012.

To help put this into context, the following map of England shows fuel poverty levels across England for the nine reporting regions. The North-West fuel poverty figure is 14.4%. This includes; Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Cheshire East, Halton, Warrington, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside.

Scale



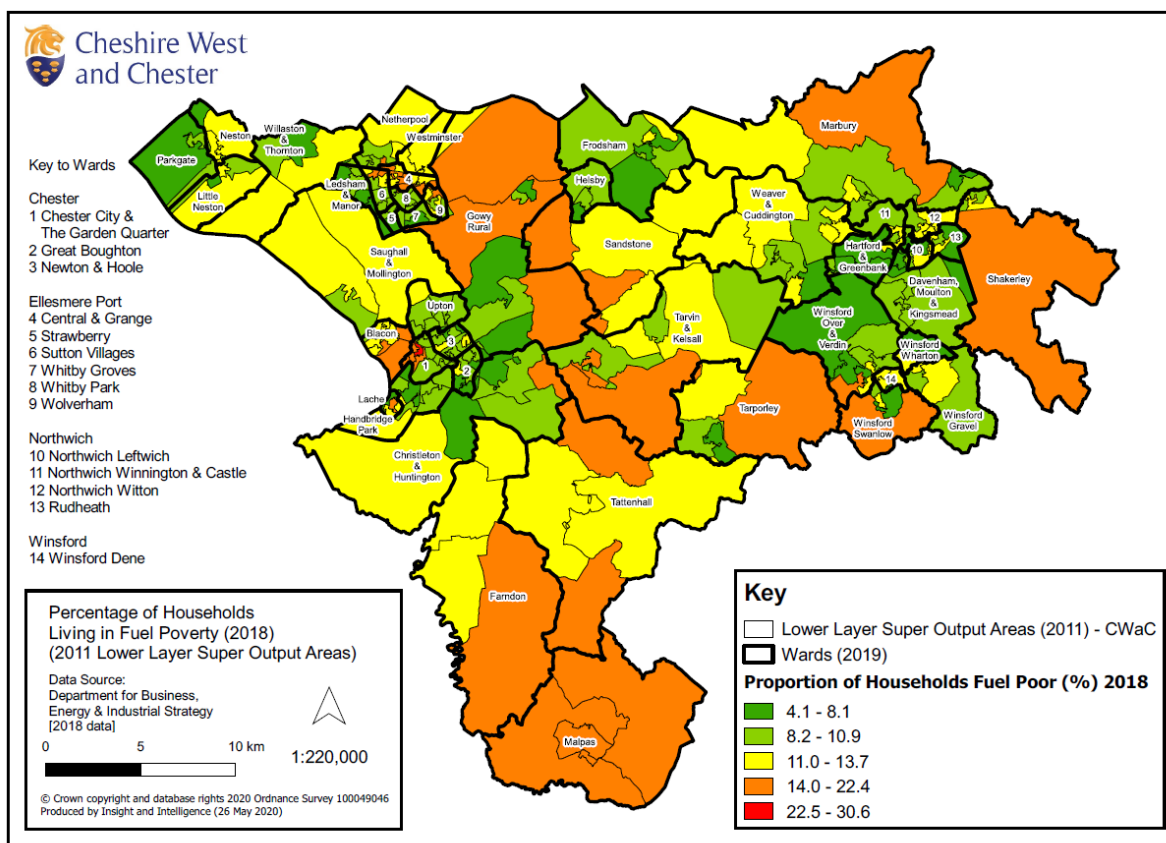
Source: BEIS (2022) / NI, Scottish (2020) & Welsh Governments (2022)

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This graphic shows a map of the UK with the most recent fuel poverty data by region. It shows Scotland as 24.6%, Northern Ireland as 22%, London as 11.5% and North West is shown as 14.4%

Source: BEIS Fuel Poverty Factsheet England, 2020

The following diagram, based on figures from 2018, illustrates fuel poverty levels across the borough.



This diagram shows areas around the borough of Cheshire West with the different levels of fuel poverty. It shows how some rural areas also have higher areas of fuel poverty.

Whilst the proportion of 'fuel poor' households in CW&C is lower than the England average of 13.2%, there is large variation across the Borough. Levels across the Borough range from 3.3% to 29.2%. A correlation exists between the most deprived areas within the borough (as measured in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019), and those areas experiencing high levels of fuel poverty. Source: BEIS Fuel Poverty Factsheet England, 2020

When we explore the available data on fuel poverty levels, households living in a privately rented property are more likely to be experiencing fuel poverty (25%), than those living in social housing (18.7%). Homeowners are the least likely to be living in fuel poverty. It is estimated that 8.4% of homeowners are fuel poor. Is it important to

add that rates of fuel poverty are constantly changing due to the range of factors that affect it, and that the rising cost of living and energy prices are likely to cause these figures to increase.

What help and assistance is currently available?

There are numerous charities and organisations offering assistance to residents. In addition to those shown below there is also advice and guidance available from the foodbank network, and through church and community groups.

- [Council's HELP team](#)
- [Energy Projects Plus](#)
- [Groundwork](#)
- [Citizens Advice](#)
- [Age UK Cheshire](#)
- [The Centre for Sustainable Energy has a Fuel Poverty calculator which has been recommended](#)
- [BEIS \(Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy\) has developed a Fuel Poverty factsheet](#)

As part of developing and strengthening the fuel poverty network across the borough to enable effective intervention, several key areas will need to be addressed:

- Strengthening the referrals routes internally and 'making every contact count'; clearly linking together opportunities to help our communities in a holistic way.
- Placing more emphasis on the effects of fuel poverty on both mental and physical health and how we can help to address this via social prescribing.
- Working closely with our partners such as NHS, DWP, Age UK Cheshire, Registered Providers for Housing and more to share best practice.

- Ensure relevant staff across all organisations in the borough are aware of the support that is currently available and collaborate to address challenges.

What have we done so far?

Over the past 10 years the Council has successfully applied to numerous funding opportunities which has resulted in a variety of measures being installed in eligible households across the borough; from loft and wall insulation to clean heat technologies and solar panels. In total over £3.5m of energy efficiency measures have been installed across the private and social rental sectors and to homeowners via National Energy Action's Technical Innovation Fund, National Grid's First-Time Central Heating Fund, the Green Homes Grant Scheme, Home Upgrade Grant Scheme and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme.

Monitoring and Reporting

This will be a four-year plan with proportional monitoring and reporting.

The delivery will be overseen by the Council's internal Climate Emergency Governance Board, with an Annual Report presented to the Climate Taskforce and Member for Housing, Planning and Climate Emergency.

The Path Ahead

We will renew our previous action plan for addressing fuel poverty following feedback from the consultation. Our work already carried out with stakeholders has defined key areas for action that we will build upon. We will create specific actions which will be measurable and time bound.

Reducing debt and maximising household income

We will develop ways for our communities to help manage their budgets against increasing costs. We will incorporate energy efficiency advice into the wider delivery of money and budgeting advice.

This is also linked to wider skills and employment opportunities and cost of living crisis. Economic inflation is driving an increase in the cost of household items including food. We are already seeing the effects of cost of living crisis in our food banks and related centres.

We want to ensure that our residents are able to access monetary advice from our partners and that we can continue to support them through in-house advice and help to minimise the impact of welfare reforms. This means trying to support communities with changes to the way/amount of financial support given as a result of changes to law and policy.

Key information

We know that there are many different aspects to why a resident may benefit from debt and income advice.

We know that our communities are key to tackling fuel poverty. Key community points such as foodbanks provide a vital and trusted resource. Our communities need similar links to energy advice in community hub spots including training being provided to deliver advice.

The Council needs to create positive examples and support employees in the fuel poverty crisis. Support for employees across workforces needs to be given such as setting examples with the living wage, making benefits available to employees to enable savings on everyday purchases and help their money go further. Additional support could also be provided through Employee Assistance Helplines, for example.

Actions:

- Incorporate energy efficiency in the delivery of money/debt advice
Measures to try and minimise the impacts of welfare reforms. This might include planning for any available external funds available and decision on how they should be used.
- Monitor the number of householders on prepayment meters and take measures to try and review the system for pre-payment meters, where possible
- Explore and implement opportunities to support employees with the fuel poverty crisis. This could include employee benefits to enable savings on everyday purchases and support through Employee Assistance Helplines.

Improving residents' health and wellbeing by tackling cold-related illness

We will strengthen our support and collaborate further with healthcare partners, such as the Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board, to reduce cold related illness. This includes working with healthcare groups in Cheshire and Merseyside to reduce hospital admissions by working on pro-active measures to help reduce fuel poverty in the community. As part of this we will analyse and strengthen referral pathways and actively explore ways to increase social prescribing within our communities.

Key information

Cold homes have been associated with reduced mobility, lower strength and dexterity and exacerbated symptoms of arthritis, which can all increase the risk of falls and unintentional injury. Cold conditions can exacerbate existing medical conditions including diabetes, certain types of ulcers and musculoskeletal pains. In addition, cold homes may slow down recovery following discharge from hospital.

Older people may be particularly vulnerable during cold periods. Research suggests cold temperatures can cause blood pressure to rise in older people, increasing the risk of strokes and other circulatory problems. A study found a relationship between the energy efficiency of the home and winter respiratory symptoms among older people. Moreover, cold homes have been associated with lower strength and dexterity and exacerbated symptoms of arthritis, which can increase the risk of falls and unintentional injury.

There will be implications of such an increase in fuel poverty for health and healthcare services. There are implications for increases in respiratory conditions and effects this will have on primary healthcare admissions and hospital admissions.

Utilising existing resources such as the Combined Intelligence for Population Health Action (CIPHA) fuel poverty dashboard to target resources and action will be critical in delivering effective outcomes. National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) NG6 on “Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes” is a further example of an existing resource and framework that can be used to guide the local approach. High-quality regional research, such as Professor Sir Michael Marmot’s report in May 2022 “All Together Fairer”, provides a further touchstone for this strategy, recognising the important and inter-linked nature of health inequalities, fuel poverty, food poverty, mental health and deprivation, and the necessity of tackling these in a joined-up way across sectors.

Actions:

- To review and implement the actions as recommended by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence and Cold Weather Plan Guidance (NICE)
- Deliver targeted activity to cold related illness patients using regional commissioning group and general practice data
- Explore and action opportunities to utilise social prescribing with front line health care staff. For example where GP's may be able to issue fuel vouchers and/or sign posting communities to key information on reducing energy bills.
- Ensure front line health care staff receive training to help signpost residents to available help and support regarding fuel poverty
- Learning is shared between the Council and NHS Partners pre/post Winter, in reference to the impact of cold homes on health

Improve the energy efficiency of homes

We will actively seek funding opportunities and work with partners to improve the energy efficiency of homes in the borough.

We also want to encourage and implement ways to make existing homes as energy efficient as possible through schemes such as retrofit. This also links with our actions on behavioural change to raise awareness of simple and effective measures to reduce energy bills in homes.

We also want to promote the benefits of new build 'Net Zero' homes. This means where greenhouse gases going into the atmosphere are balanced by removal out of the atmosphere. We want to make 'Net Zero' homes more accessible by working with our Planning teams to encourage sustainable development as best practice across the borough.

Key information

Poorly insulated homes are a key factor when addressing fuel poverty. We will identify and

apply for available funding opportunities to enable retrofit insulation and clean heating technology schemes to be undertaken. Retrofit means putting new or additional parts onto an existing buildings, especially to help improve energy efficiency. Our endeavours will cover all domestic properties regardless of whether they are privately owned, social housing tenants or private rental tenants. This will have the benefit of improving the energy efficiency of a homes across all tenures, reducing domestic carbon emissions, helping to lower fuel bills, and improving the health and well-being of some of our most vulnerable residents.

We need to work with social and private landlords to make our rented sector homes as energy efficient as possible.

Actions:

- Target fuel poor households with a property rating of below Band C for energy efficiency measures
- Develop a programme for hard-to-treat homes for park homes, solid walls and non-traditional constructions
- Target private rented properties including student accommodation
- Secure external funding for energy efficiency measures
- Develop collaboration with Registered Providers
- Raise awareness of referral network with partners and all frontline staff
- Explore where funding could be provided to support simple home improvements such as draught proofing, LED lighting, insulation, foil backing for radiators etc.
- Explore opportunities for the Council's planning policy be strengthened in relation to improving the energy efficiency of homes

Increasing renewable and low carbon technology in domestic properties

We will increase the amount of renewable energy used in domestic properties. This will include taking advantage of new technologies and innovations, where appropriate.

Key Information

We know that increasing the amount of energy from renewable and low carbon technologies will help to ensure the borough has a secure energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change and stimulate investment. We also know that investment in such areas helps to reduce energy bills.

The Council has been able to benefit from funding for low carbon technologies through retrofit. Retrofit means putting new or additional parts onto an existing buildings, especially to help improve energy efficiency. There are important roles for renewable and low carbon technology to play in our new-build housing developments.

In addition, the Council will take advantage of new technologies and innovations. The proposed hydrogen village in Ellesmere Port would see up to 2,000 properties switching from natural gas to hydrogen for heating and cooking. Community led initiatives, such as food banks and support groups, also play an increasingly important role in wider renewable energy initiatives.

Actions:

- Increase the amount of energy used in domestic properties produced from renewable sources
- Explore District Heat Network opportunities in the borough
- Explore opportunities to support local community energy networks
- That the use of ventilation, as well as insulation, is explored and used as appropriate

Encourage behavioural change to reduce energy use

We will encourage behavioural change in our communities, with partners and in our own organisation. We will seek opportunities to collaborate and ensure our communities have access to information to make informed choices.

We want to ensure that we make information accessible to our communities and that links are strengthened between the Council, residents and our partners. We want to support community volunteers to deliver appropriate energy advice and work with trusted networks and community leaders.

Key information

Behavioural change is an underlying theme to all areas in how we affect fuel poverty. There are many elements to this such as:

- The stigma associated with the term 'fuel poverty'; few people self-identify as being in fuel poverty. We want to change the culture and language for talking about how we approach the area.
- The role of occupant and household owner behaviour in trying to reduce fuel poverty; there are things that house owners and occupants can do everyday to help reduce the cost of their energy bills.
- Our own behaviours as a Council and that of our partners; we need to act as an example, support our communities and put action into our ideas.
- Perceived and actual barriers to entry to energy use such as pre-payment meters; issues such as pre-payment meters can make it very difficult for people to swap tariffs and purchase more affordable energy.

Actions:

- Provide a one-stop shop website which provides residents with information to reduce their energy use.
- Review the availability of face-to-face advice to residents across the borough to ensure a collaborative approach is taken
- Deliver appropriate fuel poverty training to practitioners, housing, health and social care staff
- Work with appropriate providers to ensure all homes receive a smart meter by 2025
- Develop a support package for schools and community energy champions
- Promote benefits of fuel tariff switching by a variety of media, with particular focus on residents who do not have access to the internet

'You Said – We Did'

From feedback gained through the consultation process and Scrutiny, we have taken this into account:

| You Said | We Did |
|--|--|
| Co-ordinated and joined up working is required with similar plans and agendas within the Council | We have continued to work closely with key internal teams, community groups and partners. This will continue to be strengthened. |
| Co-ordinated working is required with our Partner organisations (such as NHS, Council companies etc) | We have trained a number of NHS staff, Cheshire Fire and our community inspirers through internal and external sessions and continue to strengthen relationships. Furthermore, we are continuing to develop relationships with key partners and transfer knowledge and best practice |

| | |
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| <p>Disabled people need to adequately represented in the strategy and be included in the formulation of the strategy going forwards</p> | <p>We have continued to work with our communities, including those who may be particularly vulnerable to fuel poverty. We have reached out to respondents who expressed particular points to understand their concerns and work in conjunction with them</p> |
| <p>More needs to be done about the national pricing structure for energy and support from central government</p> | <p>We are continuing to analyse where we can have impact to national and international policies and action where possible</p> |
| <p>Elderly residents are particularly at risk for fuel poverty</p> | <p>We have continued to work closely with NHS colleagues, Public Health and our social care teams to spread best practice and learn how we can best help our communities</p> |
| <p>Communication of support is key to supporting the aims and objectives of the actions</p> | <p>We will continue to update the council website, understand how best to reach communities which do not have access to the internet and work with social prescribers to use additional ways to communicate</p> |
| <p>Energy efficient measures are not always affordable</p> | <p>We will continue to communicate grants that are available, work with planning colleagues on potential opportunities to strengthen planning policy and apply for grants on behalf of the council where possible and appropriate to support improvements in housing.</p> <p>The Council will soon be rolling out a digital app which will help to identify small and more affordable</p> |

| | |
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| | improvements that can be made in homes |
| Social housing needs targeted support | We are actively working with internal colleagues and relevant Partners to understand how best to provide this and will integrate this into forward plans |
| Middle income families need more support | We are actively working with internal colleagues and relevant Partners to understand how best to provide this and will integrate this into forward plans |
| Rural areas need targeted support | We have been working with our NHS colleagues and other Partners, including the voluntary sector, to understand these particular risks and how best to address |

Glossary

Energy efficiency

This refers to the measure of the overall energy efficiency of a home.

The bands go from A to G, with A being the best rating a home can have, and G being the worst. The numbers in each rating reflect the government's Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) and go from 1 to 100 SAP points. These scores are divided into bands as follows:

Fuel Poverty

In England the Government introduced a new definition of fuel poverty in 2021.

Referred to as the 'Low Income Low Energy Efficiency' (LILEE) definition of fuel poverty, it defines a household as fuel poor if:

- They are living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G. More specifically, they have a fuel poverty rating (FPEER) of Band D or below.
 - Their disposable income (income after housing costs and energy needs) would be below the poverty line (households with income below 60% of the median income).
- This means that when someone spends the required amount to heat their home, they are left with an income below the official poverty line.

Retrofit

Retrofit means putting new or additional parts onto an existing buildings, especially to help improve energy efficiency. Here it refers to the installation of renewable or low-carbon energy technologies such as solar PV or heat pumps, or measures such as insulation or smart lighting.

