

## Home Insulation Scheme & Fuel Poverty

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Councillor Clements  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Fergus Mc Morrow  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Laurie Priebe/Rachel Osborn

**Summary and Recommendation:**  
**Strategic Housing Panel are requested to note the activity around addressing fuel poverty in the Borough described in Appendix A.**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Appendix A describes recent developments in regard to installing loft and cavity wall insulation and links these to the Copeland Climate Change Action Plan.
- 1.2 It also describes how activities in Copeland operate within the context of the Cumbria Fuel Poverty Task Group and the affordable warmth strategy of a Registered Social Landlord.

### 2. STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The current loft and cavity wall insulation scheme is essentially a pragmatic work in progress in the first instance. However, it has substantial strategic implications since current reliable indicators suggest that at least 20% of private sector homes in the Borough are occupied by people experiencing fuel poverty. This is due to a variety of factors but the age and condition of much of the housing stock is significant.
- 2.2 The work described in Appendix A is an initiative that needs to be consolidated and, subject to funding, expanded in future years and included within the forthcoming overarching Housing Strategy for Copeland. This will support, and be supported by, the Copeland Climate Change Action Plan and the approach towards the development of sustainable communities.
- 2.3 Members are therefore asked to note that officers will bring forward further reports once future internal and external funding sources are clearer and as soon as longer-term strategic plans can be recommended.

## **Home Insulation & Fuel Poverty**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Panel on work around addressing fuel poverty.
- 1.2 A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it needs to spend more than 10% of its disposable income on fuel to maintain an adequate level of warmth. Fuel poverty can arise from one or a number of factors including low income, inappropriate heating tariffs, poor energy management in the home and properties which are not properly insulated. The 2007 Private Sector Stock Condition Survey reported that of the 26,147 privately owned or privately rented homes in the Borough, fuel poverty existed in 18.5%. Due to the rise in energy prices, this is now estimated to be higher.

### **2. Recent developments - Copeland Borough Council**

#### **2.1 Loft and Cavity Wall Insulation Scheme**

- 2.1.1 The Council has been working in partnership with Carlisle City Council and insulation specialists 'Book My Survey' to offer a subsidised loft and cavity wall insulation scheme across Copeland during July and August. The scheme, targeted at the private sector is funded through the Improving Cumbria's Energy (ICE) project and is subsidised further by the insulation installer. Carlisle City Council is the lead organisation for the scheme which runs on a first come first served basis. Using current data on fuel poverty, property type and current levels of insulation, just fewer than 7,000 Copeland addresses were sent a letter with details about the scheme which offers householders the opportunity to book a free survey to assess the potential for loft and cavity wall insulation. Installed measures cost the householder £25 for loft insulation, £25 for cavity wall insulation and £75 for loft insulation top up.

In the first four days of the scheme, 141 householders in Copeland had booked a survey, a 2.2% uptake. This seems low at first sight but is higher than in the other participating local authorities. See table below.

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	Carlisle 10/07/2010	Eden 14/07/2010	Copeland 15/07/2010	Barrow 19/07/2010	Total
<b>1st Response</b>					
<b>Mailed</b>	17,108	9,381	6,622	7,000	40,111
<b>Phone referral</b>	193	75	70	89	
<b>Internet referral</b>	50	35	75	43	203
<b>Word of mouth</b>	2	3	1	0	
<b>PR</b>	2	0	0	0	
<b>Total Referred</b>	247	113	146	132	638
<b>Conversion</b>	1.4%	1.2%	2.2%	1.9%	1.6%
<b>% Internet Referrals</b>	20.2%	31.0%	51.4%	32.6%	31.8%
<b>Pending</b>	2	0	1	0	3
<b>Cancelled</b>	27	1	4	1	33
<b>On Hold</b>	2	0	0	0	2
<b>Survey Booked</b>	201	111	141	131	584
<b>Surveyed</b>	14	0	0	0	14
<b>With Contractor</b>	1	1	0	0	2
<b>Total</b>	247	113	146	132	638

2.1.2 Following the mailing, Book My Survey offered the opportunity to carry out canvassing at targeted areas to increase the uptake of the scheme. Cleator Moor, Whitehaven and Egremont were targeted.

## 2.2 Copeland Climate Change Action Plan

2.2.1 A Draft Fuel Poverty Strategy was taken to Safer & Stronger OSC Committee in January 2010. Since then, the actions identified in the strategy have been incorporated into the Copeland Climate Change Action Plan which was approved by the Executive on the 29<sup>th</sup> June. Supporting the provision of affordable and sustainable housing and addressing fuel poverty was identified as one of five priorities in the Copeland Climate Change Action Plan. The insulation scheme forms one of the actions.

### **3. Recent developments – Cumbria wide**

#### **3.1 Cumbria Fuel Poverty Task Group**

3.1.1 An officer led Cumbria Fuel Poverty Task Group has been formed by the County Council with representation from the district authorities, NHS, Social Landlords and the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre amongst others. To support the group, a Cumbria Fuel Poverty Officer, Tom Barlow was appointed in May 2010 on a 3 year contract. Carlisle City Council is the host authority for the post and the role includes:

- Promoting fuel poverty issues
- Forming partnerships with agencies
- Accessing funding for insulation measures
- Producing a fuel poverty strategy/action plan
- Producing policies and procedures for the whole of Cumbria

3.1.2 An early priority for the Task Group is to agree a robust methodology for collating Cumbria wide data on fuel poverty which can then help inform the targeting of schemes to alleviate fuel poverty. Current district level data in the form of the National Fuel Poverty Indicator 187 (% people receiving income based benefits living in homes with a low energy efficiency rating) has proved to be ineffective as they are dependent on householders completing questionnaires and each authority experiences different levels of questionnaire returns.

3.1.3 The Fuel Poverty Task Group is also investigating Area Based Insulation Approaches to tackling fuel poverty. This is a methodical sweep of an area with a whole house approach to energy saving, including both soft (behavioural) and hard (installed) measures, benefit checks, social tariffs and fuel switching advice.

#### **3.2 Changes to the Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre**

3.2.1 In 2008 the Cumbria and Lancashire Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre (ESTAC) replaced the Cumbria Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. The ESTAC have recently made some changes to their services and are keen to work in closer partnership with local authorities and key organisations. The ESTAC outputs will now be assessed in terms of measures installed rather than primarily contacts with customers made and numbers of referrals.

### 3.3.1 Impact Housing's Affordable Warmth Strategy

3.3.2 Impact Housing has developed an Affordable Warmth Strategy with priorities being to:

- provide help and advice to residents
- carry out improvements to stock to maximise energy efficiency
- develop effective partnerships to reduce fuel poverty and to promote affordable warmth
- help residents and customers take advantage of a competitive supply market.

3.3.3 Impact Housing has secured funding through the European Social Fund to deliver a project called 'Green Ways to Work' which includes free training for frontline staff in Cumbrian Councils, Housing Associations and other organisations on giving basic energy efficiency advice to customers. Carlisle, South Lakeland and Barrow Councils have done or are due to undertake the training. This training would be suitable for the Council's Customer Service, Housing staff and potentially other staff that often interact with fuel poor householders during the course of delivery of their normal working practices. This training has been identified as an action in the Copeland Climate Change Action Plan.

Impact Housing's Affordable Warmth Strategy sets out a holistic approach to tackling fuel poverty and should be held up as a good example for RSL's.