



Copeland Borough Council

**Fuel Poverty
Strategy**

2009 - 2011

PROJECT RELEASE SHEET

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EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

Copeland Borough Council's corporate vision of 'leading the transformation of West Cumbria to a prosperous future' relies on the Council playing its part in delivering sustainable communities. The themes of the Corporate Plan are designed to improve quality of life across the borough and provide equality of opportunity to every one of our residents. One of the Council's main priorities is to work with our local strategic partners to tackle the causes and effects of fuel poverty and in doing so address a key area of climate change. This is a task that can only be effectively achieved through Copeland's elected members and officers taking collective responsibility for the challenge, working alongside our partners to provide clear leadership.

Fuel poverty is blight on our society that can affect many of us at some stage in our lives. Its roots lie in the relationship that exists between the cost of fuel to heat our homes and our household income. It is consequently a moving target that has most recently become harder to tackle as a consequence of the global financial crisis and the rise in energy costs. Regrettably, it is the most vulnerable in our community that suffer in these difficult times where families and the elderly in particular, are faced with the 'eat or heat' dilemma, having to sacrifice the basic necessities of life to ensure they maintain heat in their homes.

Since the emergence of statutory targets to improve domestic energy efficiency, Copeland has benefited from a steady improvement in performance. Much of it has been facilitated through national and county wide schemes, administered through the Energy Saving Trust as well as the Council's own housing improvement grants. However, there is still more work to be done and challenges lie ahead for the Council and its partners in reaching the more vulnerable households in our region, particularly those in properties that are hard to treat.

This Fuel Poverty Strategy has been prepared as a means of tackling these problems through a range of measures to ensure all of our residents can maintain affordable warmth in their homes. The strategy sits alongside those of our social housing partners and will support our collective aims of making all of the borough's homes decent whilst reducing the impact that domestic energy consumption has on climate change.

Copeland's strategy is designed to identify the issues that prohibit the Council and its partners from eradicating fuel poverty and sets in place a plan to optimise our performance through using imaginative means as well as any funding that is available to us. It is the product of consultation with our local strategic partners including social housing providers and agencies who also have a vested strategic interest in our goals.

Fuel Poverty is a problem that, unless abated, will continue get worse and cause hardship to many thousands of our residents. As a responsible Council we have a duty to take action on this crucial issue and will continue to meet the challenges that lie ahead.

Cllr George Clements

Deputy Leader for Promoting Prosperity

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of Copeland's Fuel Poverty Strategy

As part of Copeland Borough Council's commitment to the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership, this Fuel Poverty Strategy is aimed at delivering affordable warmth to all of Copeland's households, irrespective of vulnerability, tenure or occupancy that are, or may find themselves, the victims of fuel poverty. It is designed to form part of Copeland Borough Council's aims of establishing high quality private sector housing and has a strategic fit with the aims of the Financial Assistance Policy for private sector housing renewal.

For statutory reporting purposes, this document has a direct link with the wider regional and sub regional drive to improve performance against the new national performance indicator framework.

1.2 Background, Causes and Effects

1.2.1 Definition of Fuel Poverty

A household is said to be in fuel poverty 'if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate level of warmth (usually defined as 21 degrees for the main living area and 18 degrees for other occupied rooms)'. Fuel poor households are often forced to take difficult decisions about other household essentials where keeping warm means sacrificing spending on other priorities such as food, clothing and home improvements.

1.2.2 The Causes of Fuel Poverty

Fuel poverty can arise from one or a combination of factors, including:

- Low household income;
- Inappropriate heating tariffs;
- Poor energy management in the home;
- Under occupied housing;
- Inappropriately designed and insulated properties; and
- Inadequate or expensive to run heating systems;

Evidence supports the fact that lower income households are more likely to find themselves in fuel poverty and characteristically having to pay higher fuel costs. Their properties often lack investment in energy efficiency measures, such as loft or wall insulation and are made worse by having to rely on inefficient and outdated heating systems.

Many occupants in fuel poverty dwell in larger than average homes. This is particularly prevalent with elderly people who tend to remain in the home that was once occupied by their greater family. This can lead to numerous properties becoming under occupied and economically harder to heat.

Many communities do not benefit from mains gas provided through the national grid. Estimates suggest that a typical household would have to spend up to 40% more on electric storage heaters to maintain acceptable levels of heating in their home.

1.2.3 Its Effects on People

Fuel Poverty can damage people's quality of life and health as well as impose additional costs on West Cumbria's wider community. It can aggravate certain types of illness, such as respiratory disease and often restrict the choice employment for those who are seeking work. Research has linked fuel poverty with numerous adverse effects on health and well being such as:

- Increased absence from work or school;
- Higher risk of falls and accidents amongst the young and elderly;
- Greater likelihood of conditions such as influenza, heart disease and strokes caused by cold conditions; and
- Increased chronic respiratory conditions, such as asthma, caused by mould, fungal spores and house dust mites that are prevalent in cold and damp housing.

The consequences of disproportionately high spending on fuel often results in households maintaining poor diets, building up longer term health problems. Vulnerable groups who are defined as in receipt of income derived benefits, older people, disabled and families with young children, are especially prone to the effects of fuel poverty.

1.3 The Extent of the Problem

1.3.1 Nationally

From a national perspective, despite early progress with the 'UK Fuel Poverty Strategy' 2001 and the English Fuel Poverty Action Plan 2004 (See 7.1 & 7.2), the Government's recent Sixth Annual Progress Report confirmed an increase in the number of households falling into fuel poverty.

The report suggests that the majority of fuel poor are vulnerable households and that the increase is as a direct consequence of energy price rises. This is despite the significant progress made during the last decade in improving energy efficiency across the housing sector as a result of the Home Energy Conservation Act, HECA (See 7.3).

A recent briefing by National Energy Action (NEA), a leading fuel poverty charity, estimates that the number of people in fuel poverty has now reached 5 million across the UK and that in England almost 1 in 5 homes are now fuel poor, the majority being privately owned or rented. This is a significant reversal of trends since the early part of the decade.

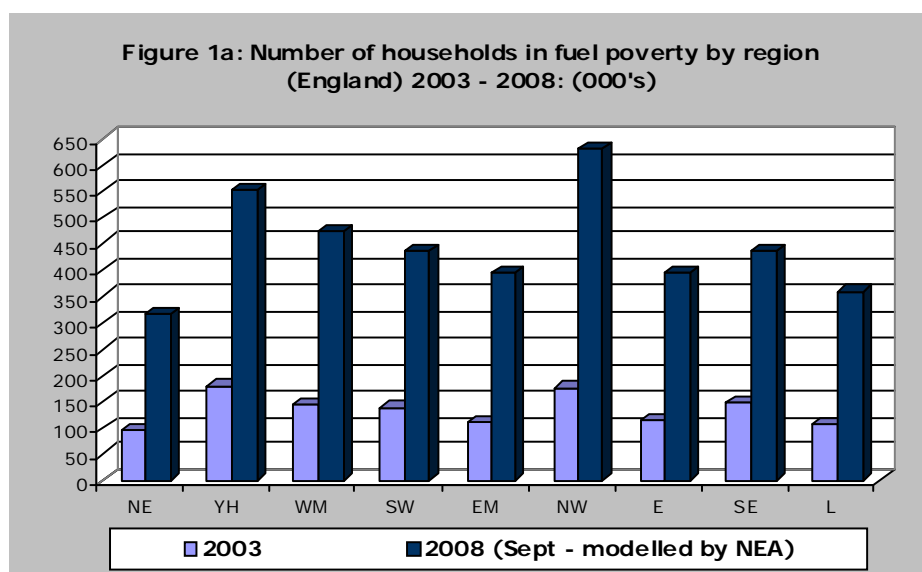
1.3.2 Regionally

NEA's most recent 'North West Fuel Poverty Briefing' has indicated that the North West has 631,200 households or around 22% living in fuel poverty. This is an increase of over 40% since 2003, highlighting the fact that the issue remains one of the most significant challenges for the region.

Those households in the North West worst affected are reported to live off the gas network, often in solid wall properties and in the most remote areas of the UK. The region has around 175,000 of these households, many of which are considered 'hard to treat' due to their location and design.

The following graph (Fig 1) shows how fuel poverty in the North West compares with other regions in the UK.

Fig 1. Source NEA



1.3.3 Locally

Prior to the recent rise in energy prices, Copeland's 2007 'Private Sector Stock Condition Survey', which is the Council's barometer for meeting the Decent Homes Standard (See 7.4), reported that of the 26,147 privately owned or privately rented homes in the borough, fuel poverty existed in 18.5% of them. At the time, the national average was 16.5%. However, given recent regional survey data, estimates would suggest this figure is now in excess of 25%. The report also highlighted that some areas of the borough were well above the national average with occupiers of pre-1919 and private-rented housing representing a significant proportion of the fuel poor.

The report, which uses the national HHSRS rating (See 7.5) goes on to say "To meet the energy efficiency requirements of the Decent Homes Standard (and by definition a reasonable degree of thermal comfort), dwellings must offer efficient heating and effective insulation. 3831 dwellings or 14.7% are estimated to fail these requirements".

Information drawn from the 'Indices of Multiple Deprivation' (See 7.6) published most recently by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) shows that Copeland is in the top quartile of the high deprivation rankings nationally being 78 out of 354. Evidence implies, through a variety of deprivation criteria, that the same areas highlighted in the Stock Condition Survey are more likely to suffer from higher levels of fuel poverty than the borough average.

As part of a sub regional initiative, work is underway to establish a fuel poverty baseline. This will be used by partners in the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership as part of a their Local Area Agreement (LAA) to report progress on the new national indicator for fuel poverty, NI 187 (See 7.7)

2. SOLUTIONS TO FUEL POVERTY

2.1 Energy Efficiency and Grant Funding

By far one of the most cost effective means of mitigating fuel poverty is to improve the energy efficiency of a property. Wherever possible, lofts should contain a minimum of 250mm of insulation and any cavity walls should be similarly filled with an appropriate thermal barrier. It is recommended that for homes on the gas grid that heating is provided through a high efficiency or 'A' rated boiler which is regulated through heating controls. Double or secondary glazing and draught proofing are also important measures that should be considered to improve thermal efficiency or SAP ratings (*See 7.8*)

Hard to treat homes are traditionally those that cannot accommodate standard models of energy efficiency. They are normally homes that are:

- Off the gas grid
- Of solid wall construction
- Have no loft space (flat roofs)
- In a poor state of general repair (non decent) or;
- Multiple occupancy high rise

Properties that are 'Hard to Treat' can be improved by more expensive external/internal insulation cladding and renewable energy heating, like heat pumps or biomass, as long as such measures are permitted. Listed Buildings and those located in the National Parks can often be prohibited from some types of energy efficiency improvement.

The government's Warm Front scheme offers householders grant funding for eligible households who depending on income, tenure, age or disability will qualify for a range of financially assisted packages to improve energy performance.

In a bid to tackle Fuel Poverty as well as Climate Change, Energy Suppliers have been required to meet Carbon Emissions Reduction Targets (CERT) and offer a scheme that will provide over £2.8m in support of energy efficiency improvements. Like warm Front the scheme is particularly targeted at eligible groups but as well as insulation measures is also being used to promote renewable energy heating and lighting technologies.

2.2 Advice, Education and Training

Understanding how to manage energy in the home has also been identified as a key area that will have an impact on reducing fuel poverty. Education and advice is essential to this aim and homeowners need to be guided on what measures they can take themselves and where to access funds for energy efficiency improvements.

As well as ensuring energy suppliers take on this responsibility, the government has provided funding for national agencies such as the Energy Savings Trust (EST) to deliver this service at a sub regional level through Advice Centres, known as ESTAC's.

2.3 Fuel Switching and Energy Tariffs

Heating systems, particularly coal, oil or LPG fired are traditionally expensive to run and for properties that can access natural gas from the grid, grant funding has been provided to some vulnerable groups to help them switch to high efficiency gas boilers.

Householders can often pay too much for their energy due to being on an inappropriate energy tariff. Occupants, particularly those in rented accommodation, regularly use prepayment meters that are one of the most expensive forms of payment for energy.

Homeowners are now being encouraged to explore fuel switching and other payment and tariff options by contacting their energy suppliers or getting advice from other agencies. This can often lead to significant annual savings in energy costs.

2.4 Maximising Income

A longer term solution to fuel poverty is to ensure that families and individuals are financially secure and access all the benefits they are entitled to. Social security systems provide some assistance through the form of grants, loans or selective payments, however some families and individuals, through lack of understanding or willingness to take support from the state, remain fuel poor despite these entitlements.

Good advice is essential to tackling this issue and Councils along with agencies such as the Pensions Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, Money Advice Agency or Welfare Rights Office are well placed to provide support in this area.

3. ACTING ON FUEL POVERTY

3.1 Progress in Delivering National and Local Policy

Full details of national policy and standards used to tackle fuel poverty are set out in Section 7 of this strategy.

The following sections set out what actions Copeland Borough Council and its partners have taken in response to national policy and the local and regional initiatives that have and are currently delivering progress.

3.1.1 Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA)

HECA's latest 12th Progress Report, submitted in Nov 2008, states that Copeland's performance in energy efficiency has steadily improved in areas such as loft insulation and double glazing where the borough is now above the national average. The report indicates that energy consumption in the area has been reduced by 18.69% from the 1996 baseline although the average SAP rating remains only slightly above national averages at 50.

Many of the energy efficient improvements that have been delivered in response to HECA have occurred as a result of grant funded work facilitated through the Cumbria Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, CEEAC (See 3.2.3) and through the Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal fund (See 3.1.3.1). However, the report goes on to identify significant challenges with 'Hard to Treat' properties of solid wall construction as well as areas of high deprivation where vulnerable households are prevalent.

3.1.2 National Indicator NI 187

NI 187 is now a key deliverable for the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership through its LAA and work is underway to identify those households that qualify as fuel poor across each of Cumbria's districts. The aim is to gather sufficient data to set a baseline and allow each authority to target specific areas for energy efficiency improvement measures where SAP ratings are below 35. The survey data uses a government approved sampling technique that will identify a range of fuel poverty characteristics.

The work undertaken to report on progress with NI 187 will dovetail into the much broader action that the Council is tackling to address climate change and NI 186 to reducing CO₂ per capita (See 5.1).

3.1.3 Decent Homes Standard

3.1.3.1 Private Sector Housing Renewal

Private Sector Housing in Copeland still remains the greatest challenge where, following the 2007 stock condition survey, 32.8% of all private stock was considered non-decent.

Under Copeland's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy which is designed to deliver Decent Homes to private sector housing, the Council's Housing renewal Team have prepared a new Financial Assistance Policy which from April 2009 is designed to deliver grant funding to homeowners and first time buyers of non decent properties. The policy contains measures to financially assist low-income households with grants aimed at improving the quality and standards of occupancy. The scheme will include financial support for energy efficiency measures using grant funded schemes such as Warm Front

and CERT. The Policy will be targeted at those in Copeland's community who qualify as:

- vulnerable,
- elderly,
- a family or:
- a first time buyer purchasing a property that has been empty for at least six months and fails the decent homes standard

The Financial Assistance Policy is directly linked to the aims of this Fuel Poverty Strategy and represents a further stage in the housing renewal process, where homeowners who qualify for funding for energy efficiency improvements will automatically be considered for additional financial assistance to make their homes decent. The Financial Assistance Policy is to be reviewed every 2 years to ensure it remains effective.

3.1.3.2 Social Housing

Within Copeland and West Cumbria, progress on Decent Homes has been more evident in the social housing market. This is because Copeland's social housing partners generally having a well defined strategic approach and greater influence on the way in which money is used on their housing stock.

Copeland Homes, which is part of the Home Group and represents over 20% of Copeland's housing stock. The housing association is drawing towards the end of its Decent Homes improvement programme and is on schedule to meet the target of making the majority of its homes Decent by December 2010. The programme has incorporated improvements to heating systems and home insulation where necessary not only to meet the standard but to improve the efficiency of the heating installations to ensure that they are affordable to run. For the remaining stock that is considered 'Hard to Treat' or poor quality, Copeland homes have recently been given dispensation by the Housing Corporation to defer the completion dates. The deferral will provide time to consider whether the stock should be demolished or receive major investment for refurbishment.

Both Two Castles and Impact Housing, who are associations that represent around 2% of Copeland's remaining social housing, report that they are well ahead with meeting the Decent Homes standard by 2010

3.1.4 Building Control, Planning and IT

Copeland's Building Control and Planning Teams currently monitor and provide support for householders to improve their homes. As part of an initiative to improve access to advice, a greater array of energy advice will be made available through the Council's web portal, offering broader and more technically based information.

The system is to be developed during 2008/9 onwards and will draw from a budget of £64,000. As part of the process, work is planned to develop an interface with the Council's existing Geographic Information System (GIS) to gather data on areas of deprivation, general stock condition and energy performance from Building Control records across the authority. This information is then be used to identify potentially fuel poor households and target funding for Decent Homes

3.2 Sub Regional and Local Initiatives

3.2.1 North West Domestic Energy Alliance

In March 2008, the North West Domestic Energy Alliance, which is a collaborative initiative supported by NEA, the Government Office of the

North West and a range of agencies, conducted a workshop to help facilitate and encourage the region's stakeholders to achieve their individual targets on fuel poverty. The workshop had six themes covering communication, targeting, funding, renewable energy, training and integration into local policy.

The initiative was a catalyst to Copeland BC's subsequent work with the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership through their Local Area Agreement to take a sub regional strategic approach in addressing fuel poverty.

3.2.2 West Cumbria Strategic Partnership

The West Cumbria Strategic Partnership's delivery plan requires that Copeland and Allerdale Councils will report their progress on delivering Fuel Poverty measures in support of NI 187 targets, and part of their Local Area Agreement, LAA.

Consideration is also being given to the preparation of a West Cumbria Fuel Poverty Strategy which will identify collective measures that can be taken to address fuel poverty. Both Councils are working with local RSL's and other partners develop a sub regional framework to deliver LAA targets and capitalise on economies through collaborative working.

3.2.3 Energy Saving Trust Advice Centre

Copeland's residents have been fortunate to benefit from an award winning service that has provided energy efficiency advice and support across Cumbria. The Cumbria Energy Efficiency advice Centre (CEEAC) has received the majority of its funding from the EST and with financial support from Carlisle City Council, has administered grant funding through the governments Warm Front Scheme and CERT (See 2.1). CEEAC has been influential in helping Copeland's private homeowners and social housing organisations improve home energy efficiency across the borough.

In 2009, TADEA a new Sustainable Energy Centre, will replace CEEAC. The company will be responsible for administering the duties of CEEAC as well as provide a much broader sustainability focussed service to the North West and North East including:

- Offering advice and support across Cumbria to reduce carbon
- Project managing sustainable energy schemes
- Facilitating a step change in demand and the strategic benefits of insulation
- Developing a market for renewable energy solutions
- Develop insulation solutions for hard to treat homes

3.2.4 Anchor Staying Put Agency

The council work in conjunction with Anchor Staying Put Agency as part of its drive to support householders in poor or inappropriate accommodation. The agency has previously administered the Councils funding scheme for home improvements and disabled facility improvements and has offered home advice, leaflets and support for vulnerable groups, particularly the disabled and elderly to access grants for home improvements including insulation, double glazing and new central heating.

In April 2009, some of the work carried out through the agreement is to transfer back to the Council and be administered under Financial Assistance Policy for private sector housing.

3.2.5 Impact Housing's Community Heating Scheme

Impact Housing currently have outline proposals for a renewable energy (biomass, wood fired) community heating scheme in Eskdale, a remote part of Copeland's borough, located off the gas grid. The scheme, which has financial backing by the government, is to serve 12 homes owned by Impact and 17 private homes in the area. If further funding is found, the scheme is likely to be heralded an exemplar of good practice, magnifying the benefits of alternative renewable energy heating solutions to tackle fuel poverty in remote communities. The initiative is expected to significantly reduce fuel costs for its participants who have traditionally relied upon electric heating to heat their homes and is seen as a preferable renewable alternative to wind turbines.

Plans exist to develop further schemes within the more remote communities in the Lake District that are potentially 'Hard to Treat' and located off the gas grid. The concept has a good strategic fit with the Council's sustainable communities objectives and the nuclear energy agenda, which identifies with balancing energy needs through use of renewable technologies.

3.2.6 Energy Services Company (ESCo)

Complementary to the Eskdale Community Heating Scheme, proposals are in place to establish an Energy Services Company (ESCo). Led by Impact Housing in partnership with NEA, the ESCo's purpose will be to offer:

- Energy audits and advice for residents in fuel poverty
- A domestic energy management service
- Energy efficiency and renewable energy measures for individuals or clusters of dwellings
- Bulk buying and onward sale of carbon-abated fuel supplies from mainstream suppliers
- Community-based renewable energy production and distribution

Work is presently underway to establish whether the remit of the ESCo could be extended to include the delivery energy efficiency improvements, such as loft and cavity wall insulation, across the region as an alternative to existing contracted arrangements.

The initiative is designed to support the regional and local drive to provide regeneration through new business opportunities and include opportunities to retrain the unemployed.

Local partners, including Copeland Council and representatives from the nuclear industry, are currently being consulted to establish the extent and opportunities that exist for developing the business case.

Impact Housing are currently preparing a bid to access additional European funding for the scheme.

4. CHALLENGES, ISSUES AND FUTURE PROPOSALS

4.1 Moving Forward and Prioritising Action on Fuel Poverty

Despite progress that is being made, there are still numerous areas where Copeland Borough Council and its partners can make an impact. As energy efficiency measures improve across the borough, the task becomes even greater with costs becoming more prohibitive as the cheaper energy efficient options become exhausted.

The following paragraphs set out some of the challenges and issues that the Council needs to address through its Fuel Poverty Action Plan (*See 6.0*) which attempts to evaluate and prioritise its aims to ensure the Council continues to deliver value for money as part of its future proposals.

4.2 Helping Residents, Owner Occupiers and Private landlords

There is still a need to identify and tackle the remaining 'quick wins' that can be delivered through low cost energy efficient measures. As the focal point for the community, the Council will need to take a central role in helping residents and particularly owner occupiers, to understand how to improve energy efficiency still further and what benefits, grants and expert support are available to them. The Council will therefore need to consider:

- Working in partnership with TADEA and agencies that support vulnerable groups
- Ensuring the Financial Assistance Policy for private sector housing is understood by front line staff and those dealing with public enquiries to ensure maximum opportunity of uptake. Carry out training and briefings to key staff
- Training customer services staff to offer basic advice and where to refer residents for further information on grant funding and energy efficiency measures
- Promoting energy efficiency advice and funding leaflets from relevant agencies
- Preparing and promoting leaflets to promote Copeland's Financial Assistance Packages for private housing
- Providing technical training for key officers to ensure residents are given the best advice energy efficient and renewable technologies
- Developing a web portal to provide full range of energy efficiency information and links to other agencies and funding sources
- Establishing a new sub regional forum for private landlords to increase consultation
- Examining any areas where incentives could be offered to private landlords to improve energy efficiency in their properties
- Consulting with other authorities and agencies to identify examples of best practice to engage private landlords

Traditionally, the private rented sector has been slow to respond to energy efficient improvements in their properties which often suffer from poor construction and decent facilities. In order to reach this important sector, the Council will need to consider:

- Establishing a new sub regional forum for private landlords to increase consultation
- Examine any areas where incentives could be offered to private landlords to improve energy efficiency in their properties
- Consult with other authorities and agencies to identify examples of best practice to engage private landlords

4.3 Hard to Treat Homes

Energy efficiency in 'Hard to Treat' homes in both the private rented and owner-occupier sectors present one of the Council's biggest challenges if it wishes to reduce fuel poverty in these properties. Alternative thermal insulation and renewable energy technologies are particularly important in dealing with hard to treat homes but can be costly. They include:

- Internal or external wall insulation
- High performance glazing
- Heat pumps and biomass boilers
- Solar thermal and Solar photovoltaic (PV) panels
- Heat recovery and Combined heat and power (CHP) systems

Unfortunately, many of these measures will be unattractive to the private sector offering little payback despite substantial funding support from the government and energy suppliers. The Council will therefore need to consider means to make such measures more attractive. Consideration must therefore be given to:

- Identifying Hard to Treat homes exist on the borough and mapping individual characteristics onto the Councils' GIS system
- Examining areas, particularly in high deprivation areas where owners or landlords could share economies through community heating schemes
- Examining ways of mitigating short term costs for private homeowners who are willing to invest in longer term energy efficiency measures
- Preparing a schematic and selective methodology to ensure that grants and loans for energy efficiency improvements are targeted at the largest potential gain in energy efficiency and that the Council's Financial Assistance Policy delivers value for money

4.4 Targeting Vulnerable Groups and the Elderly

Vulnerable groups are a priority for the government in its drive to improve performance nationally through NI 187. Those who are vulnerable feature heavily in national strategies. They are identified as being on income derived benefits, including families with children, the disabled and elderly. However some of the elderly who are not in receipt of benefits (e.g purely on state pension) can still find themselves in fuel poverty due to restricted income. Many do not have access to the internet and because of pride or lack of means, miss out on benefit entitlement, opportunities to access better fuel tariffs and free grant funding to improve their homes.

In recognising this important area in the drive to tackle fuel poverty, the Council will need to target vulnerable and elderly residents irrespective of means to ensure that they too benefit from the range of benefits and grants available. The Council will therefore need to consider:

- Building stronger links with agencies representing the elderly and vulnerable groups to directly target advice and support on benefits, fuel switching and grants
- Work with contractors, such as Go Warm or the proposed ESCo (See 3.2.6), to offer free home surveys and provide advice to vulnerable and elderly householders in order to provide access benefits, fuel switching and grant funding
- Set up a Fuel Switching Open day with energy advice and agencies representing the elderly and vulnerable which encourages residents to bring in their energy bills and examine opportunities to save

4.5 Collaborative Working

The strategic partnerships that exist with Allerdale, RSL's and agencies are vital if the Council is to deliver its targets on fuel poverty. The Council recognises the need to continue and take a proactive role in future forums and to combine these efforts as part of the corporate drive to deliver sustainable communities and fight climate change. To ensure value from the process, efforts must be made to identify in greater detail the costs and opportunities that exist through a joint approach to commissioning work. The Council will need to consider:

- Examining opportunities for combined tendering for energy efficiency work that is targeted at areas of high deprivation
- Support the work undertaken as part of Impact Housing's drive to establish a new ESCo and promote biomass in remote communities
- Attempt to quantify the costs of eradicating fuel poverty through increasing average SAP ratings above 65 across the borough's housing stock and factoring them into a potential long term budgetary framework

5. CONSULTATION WITH PARTNERS

5.1 Cumbria County Council

The Cumbria Climate Change Strategy and its action plan which is presently under consultation, has been prepared by Cumbria County Council as part of the Cumbria Strategic Partnership (CSP). The County Council as the lead authority on national indicator NI 186 (reducing CO² per capita) will require the support of Copeland Borough Council, as strategic partners, to reduce CO² in their area. The strategy is overarching across a range of sources responsible for CO² and includes aims to reduce domestic energy consumption.

Following consultation with Cumbria County Council, it is proposed that, as well as this Fuel Poverty Strategy, Copeland will prepare its own Climate Change Strategy and action plan to address NI 186. This will take place in early 2009 and will dovetail with this Fuel Poverty Strategy as well as the Cumbria Climate Change Strategy.

5.2 TADEA

TADEA has stated that, like CEEAC, they will continue to support all authorities and their residents in offering energy efficiency advice and provide access to grant funding. TADEA would like Copeland Borough Council to become more actively engaged in the sub regional strategic drive to tackle fuel poverty, either on a county wide basis or with its West Cumbria partners.

The organisation has defined their role as reactive and will support the aims of Copeland Borough Council and its partners on energy efficiency projects designed to eradicate fuel poverty. As such, TADEA would like the Council to consider how it can continue to utilise the service and where reciprocal support could be offered, given the previous success of CEEAC.

5.3 Copeland Homes

Copeland Homes were formally part of Copeland Borough Council until 2004 where, following stock transfer, the organisation joined the Home Group who is the largest supplier of social housing in Copeland.

Relationships are good between Copeland Homes and the Council's Housing Renewal Team who enjoy constructive dialogue and share information.

Following consultation with Copeland Home's Head of Asset Management, it is clear that the organisation is keen to develop local initiatives with the Council and its partners. An area of particular interest is a joint approach to community heating schemes, particularly where there is a mix of social and private sector housing.

Copeland homes consider that both organisations could benefit from significant economies of scale if such schemes were submitted for external funding under joint arrangements.

5.4 Allerdale Borough Council

Allerdale Borough Council as a member of West Cumbria Strategic Partnership has expressed a desire to work more closely with Copeland Borough Council to jointly tackle fuel poverty. Brief discussions have taken

place to establish whether there would be financial benefit in targeting fuel poverty in high deprivation areas through jointly tendering for contracts.

At present there are a number of contractors, such as Go Warm, who have a franchise to deliver grant funded energy efficiency upgrades to vulnerable households through the CERT scheme. The initiative could allow both authorities to address fuel poverty area by area and share the costs of tendering and project management.

5.5 Impact Housing

Impact Housing would like to explore the opportunity of developing community initiatives, such as community heating schemes and the proposed EScO, to tackle fuel poverty with the Council and its strategic partners.

The organisation is keen to build links with members and officers of the Council and develop initiatives sub regionally which will serve to not only assist economic regeneration of the area but become a model of sustainable communities that have balanced energy demand using a mixture of alternative energy solutions that complement the environment.

The organisation wishes to develop the potential for renewable energy heating technologies, in particular biomass, as an alternative to wind turbines in sensitive areas and sees benefit in economies of scale by including private sector housing within schemes.

5.6 Anchor Staying Put Agency

Views required (Mary Bradley of AC to respond to Laurie Priebe)

5.7 Age Concern

Views required (To be consulted)

5.8 Other Agencies?

Any other views?

6. FUEL POVERTY ACTION PLAN 2009 - 2011

Action	Financial and/or Resource Implications	Lead Officer(s) - other Partners	By when	Monitoring Officer - Performance Measurement	Priority Rating A – high B – med C - low
1. Ref 4.2 - Continue to promote energy efficiency measures to private homeowners, private landlords and particularly low income and potentially fuel poor households:		L Priebe (LP) -		C Ponson (CP)–	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work in partnership with TADEA and agencies that support vulnerable groups 	5 staff days pa	TADEA	Ongoing	Evidence of working collectively	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the Financial Assistance Policy for private sector housing is understood by front line staff and those dealing with public enquiries to ensure maximum opportunity of uptake. Carry out training and briefings to key staff 	10No. ½ day training sessions Plus training costs	Tom Bruce and Hsg Rnwl Team	01/4/09	Completion of Training	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train customer services staff to offer basic advice and where to refer residents for further information on grant funding and energy efficiency measures 	£2500 (est)	Jane Salt and CS staff	01/04/09	Completion of Training	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote energy efficiency advice and funding leaflets from relevant agencies 	Nil	Jane Salt and CS staff	01/02/09	Leaflets Customer Service areas	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and promote leaflets to promote Copeland's Financial Assistance Packages for private housing 	£1500 (est)	Debbie Cochrane and Hsg Rnwl	01/06/09	Completion of Training	A
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide technical training for key officers to ensure residents are given the best advice energy efficient and renewable technologies 	£3000 (est)	Bldg Cntrl, Planning and Hsg Rnwl	01/06/06	Completion of Training	A

Action	Financial and/or Resource Implications	Lead Officer(s) - other Partners	By when	Monitoring Officer - Performance Measurement	Priority Rating A – high B – med C - low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a web portal to provide full range of energy efficiency information and links to other agencies and funding sources Establish a new sub regional forum for private landlords to increase consultation Examine any areas where incentives could be offered to private landlords to improve energy efficiency in their properties Consult with other authorities and agencies to identify examples of best practice to engage private landlords 	£5000 (est)	Service Heads and IT contractor	01/04/09	Active web portal	
<p>2. Ref 4.3 Identify and target 'Hard to Treat' homes for special measures to improve energy efficiency through practical means and funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying Hard to Treat homes exist on the borough and mapping individual characteristics onto the Councils' GIS system Examine areas, particularly in high deprivation areas where owners or landlords could share economies through community heating schemes Examine ways of mitigating short term costs for private homeowners who are willing to invest in longer term energy efficiency measures Prepare a schematic and selective methodology to ensure that grants and loans for energy efficiency improvements 					

Action	Financial and/or Resource Implications	Lead Officer(s) - other Partners	By when	Monitoring Officer - Performance Measurement	Priority Rating A – high B – med C - low
are targeted at the largest potential gain in energy efficiency and that the Council's Financial Assistance Policy delivers value for money					
<p>3. Ref 4.4 - Target vulnerable groups and the elderly to ensure they are supported in benefit entitlement, fuel switching and grant funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build stronger links with agencies representing the elderly and vulnerable groups to directly target advice and support on benefits, fuel switching and grants • Work with contractors to offer free home surveys and provide advice to vulnerable and elderly householders in order to provide access benefits, fuel switching and grant funding • Set up a Fuel Switching Open day with energy advice and agencies representing the elderly and vulnerable which encourages residents to bring in their energy bills and examine opportunities to save 					
<p>4. Ref 4.5 – Work collaboratively with strategic partners to capitalise on value and opportunities through better economies to fight fuel poverty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining opportunities for combined tendering for energy efficiency work that is targeted at areas of high deprivation 					

Action	Financial and/or Resource Implications	Lead Officer(s) - other Partners	By when	Monitoring Officer - Performance Measurement	Priority Rating A – high B – med C - low
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the work undertaken as part of Impact Housing's drive to establish a new ESCo and promote biomass in remote communities • Attempt to quantify the costs of eradicating fuel poverty through increasing average SAP ratings above 65 across the borough's housing stock and factoring them into a potential long term budgetary framework 					

7. NATIONAL POLICY AND STANDARDS

7.1 UK Fuel Poverty Strategy

The government's UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, published in 2001, provides the framework on which local fuel poverty strategies should be based. The strategy is complemented by the aims of the Energy White Paper and UK Sustainable Development Strategy which all target the eradication of fuel poverty. The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy requires that each year a report is compiled for the government to measure progress.

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy targets fuel poverty in three key areas:

- Improving the energy efficiency of the homes of people in fuel poverty
- Putting pressure on energy suppliers to reduce fuel bills, ensure fair treatment and develop industry initiatives to combat fuel poverty
- Tackling fuel poverty by assisting those on low incomes and reducing social exclusion

The Strategy's original aim was, that by 2004, over 1m households in the UK would have improved heating and insulation, the number of non decent home would be reduced by a third and by 2010 Fuel poverty would be eradicated amongst vulnerable groups with all social housing meeting the decent homes standard. After 2010, it was proposed that a concerted effort will be made to tackle fuel poverty amongst 'healthy adult' (non-vulnerable) households. As such, Copeland's Fuel Poverty strategy is designed to meet those needs.

7.2 The English Fuel Poverty Action Plan

In acknowledging the increased challenges presented through rising energy costs, the government's 2004 action plan 'Fuel Poverty in England: The Government's Plan for Action', identified increased measures to address fuel poverty, including:

- Increased development of the Warm Front scheme, with more grant aid available
- Full implementation of the Decent Homes Standard in all housing sectors
- Introduction of minimum energy performance standards Part L of the Building Regulations to improve the energy efficiency of new dwellings and extensions
- The requirement of energy efficiency ratings for all new, rented or sold properties through an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC)
- The introduction of Home Information Packs including information on energy efficiency
- Application of the HHSRS for stock assessments to identify hazards including, cold, damp and mould
- Introduction of the Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC), now replaced by Carbon Emissions reduction Target (CERT) which is now the principal grant funding source for energy efficiency improvements for homes in the UK, targeted at priority low income and fuel poor groups. CERT came into effect on 1 April 2008 and will run until 2011.
- Providing energy efficiency advice directly through energy suppliers or through energy advice centres managed by the EST.
- Encouraging other organisations to provide advice aimed at assisting households who are fuel poor.

7.3 Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA)

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) required Councils to reduce domestic energy consumption by 30% within 15 years of from a baseline set in 1996. Councils are required to submit annual progress reports detailing their achievements across all tenures and as part of their annual reporting requirements and are expected to deliver this commitment through a strategic approach.

HECA is due for repeal in early 2009 and is expected to be replaced by the government's new performance reporting framework, which embraces the wider climate change agenda, including that of NI 187.

7.4 Decent Homes Standard

As well as seeking to eradicate fuel poverty amongst 'vulnerable' groups, government policy is established to ensure that, by 2010, all social housing is deemed as 'decent', the standard includes criteria for meeting thermal comfort and a free of significant health and safety hazards (measured under the HHSRS).

In 2002 the government renewed its commitment to making all social housing decent by 2010 and extended the remit to cover vulnerable households in the private sector.

The Decent Homes Target Implementation Plan 2003 sets out delivery targets for specific years up to 2020 expressed as a proportion of vulnerable households in the private sector living in decent homes. The relevant target percentages are 65% by 2006, 70% by 2010, and 75% by 2020. There is also a target that this proportion will increase year by year.

7.5 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

The HHSRS rating is a defining part of the Decent Homes standard and was introduced with the 2004 Housing Act to replace the previous Housing Fitness Standard. The standard uses 29 risk assessment criteria to assess the condition of a property and looks at whether premises have any defects that may give rise to hazard, which in turn could cause harm to the occupiers, or any visitors. A residential property should be capable of satisfying the basic fundamental needs for the everyday life of a household, such as providing shelter, space and facilities for the occupants.

The HHSRS methodology is used to calculate Copeland's 2007 Private Sector Housing Stock Condition report and provides the Council with a basis for taking action to address fuel poverty.

7.6 Indices of Deprivation

The government publishes an Indices of Deprivation which can be used at local level for strategic purposes. The indices cover seven different domains of deprivation, namely:

- Income deprivation
- Employment deprivation
- Health deprivation and disability
- Education, skills and training
- Barriers to housing and services
- Crime; and
- Living environment

The income domain also provides measures of the number of children and older people who live in low-income households and can be used to target

potentially fuel poor areas. The domains are weighted when combined to create an overall index

7.7 National Indicator (NI) 187

The new national performance reporting framework for local government which is due to commence in 2009 is to record progress against a series of climate change related national indicators, including NI 187 which is designed to tackle fuel poverty. The rationale behind NI 187 is that on average 60% of all fuel poor households are in receipt of means tested benefits. NI 187 requires the Council to monitor and report the proportion of people receiving income derived benefits who occupy homes with a low (SAP 35) and high (SAP 65) energy efficiency rating.

7.8 Standard Assessment procedure (SAP)

The Standard Assessment procedure or SAP is the nationally recognised methodology for producing an energy rating for a dwelling used. It takes into account factors that affect the energy efficiency of the building such as fuel type, heating, water heating and insulation. The SAP (2005) scale ranges from 1 through to 100, a SAP of 0 to 35 is at the very poor/poor end of the scale to where 65 to 100 is at the good to outstanding end of the scale.

SAP is used as a means of measuring energy performance of building and is a key part of the new Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) as well as a means of measuring performance against NI 187.

7.9 Building and Planning Regulation

Amendments to the Building Regulations have included a focus on increased energy efficiency in dwellings as well as actively promoting energy efficiency. Part L is designed to ensure a raise in standards of thermal performance in properties, which includes new and replacement boilers.

Planning authorities are also required to ensure that energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy solutions are a strategic consideration when awarding planning consent.

8. CROSS LINKING TO LOCAL POLICY

8.1 The West Cumbria Sustainable Communities Strategy

This collaborative strategy which is entitled 'Future Generation' is the product of a Local Area Agreement between Allerdale BC, Copeland BC and Cumbria CC under the West Cumbria Strategic Partnership. Its purpose is to produce a joint vision for creating sustainable communities in the West Cumbria. The strategy is geared to meet the diverse needs of West Cumbria's residents, businesses and visitors, without compromising the quality of life which future generations can enjoy.

The strategy has a vision for West Cumbria which is set out as:

- being globally recognised as a leading nuclear, energy, environment and related technology business cluster, building on its nuclear assets and its technology and research strengths;
- being a strong, diversified and well-connected economy, with a growing, highly-skilled population with high employment;
- protecting and enhancing its special natural environments and be recognised by all as an area of outstanding natural beauty and vibrant lifestyle, which attracts a diverse population and visitor profile;
- being home to a strong and healthy community which offers all of its people a good quality of life and enables them to play a full part in their community.

8.2 Copeland BC - Corporate Plan 2007-2012

Copeland Borough Council's Corporate Plan has 3 cross cutting key themes which are drawn from the West Cumbria Communities Strategy and tailored to meet the needs of the borough's own community.

This Fuel Poverty Strategy is designed to support the key deliverables of both the West Cumbria Sustainable Communities Strategy and the Copeland's Corporate Plan. They include:

Theme 1 - Effective Leadership

1.1 Influencing national change; leading regional and local change (*Relevance - Leading of Fuel Poverty and Climate Change*)

1.2 Providing clear direction (*Relevance - Maintaining a strategic approach to fuel poverty*)

Theme 2 – Achieving Transformation

2.1 Strong partnership arrangements (*Relevance – Maintaining Local Strategic Partnerships*)

2.6 Equality of opportunity (*Relevance - Supporting vulnerability*)

2.9 Effective performance management (*Relevance – Monitoring and reporting on NI 187*)

Theme 3 - Promoting Prosperity

3.4 Sustainability (*Relevance – Supporting sustainable communities*)

3.5 Decent housing (*Relevance – Thermally comfortable homes*)

3.7 Improving health (*Relevance – Supporting affordable warmth to households*)

8.3 Cumbria Housing Strategy

The Cumbria Housing Strategy which was launched in 2006 and is one of the first sub regional Fit-for-Purpose strategies of its kind. It is the product of collaboration between the local strategic partners in support of sustainable communities and targets 5 key housing issues. They are:

- The shortage of affordable housing
- Creating decent homes and environments
- Housing the homeless
- Regeneration
- Homes with support or additional facilities

The strategy links directly through the 3 themes of Copeland Borough Council's Corporate Plan

8.4 Private Sector Housing Strategy in Copeland

Copeland Borough Council's strategic approach to private sector housing was the subject of severe criticism by the Audit Commission following an inspection into the service in March 2008. Since then considerable effort and resources have been targeted at improving performance across the housing service.

The Council's strategic housing delivery framework is currently being reviewed and is to be initially embodied in a corporate Strategic Housing Action Plan which will be the precursor to the preparation of full strategic housing strategy in 2009.

The action plan will draw its objectives from the Cumbria Housing strategy and Council's Corporate Plan 2007 – 2012 and will be supported by a number of key documents including the following:

- Homelessness strategy (approved Nov 2008)
- Financial Assistance Policy for private sector housing renewal (Approved Nov 2008)
- Housing Allocations Scheme (In draft at Nov 2008)
- Affordable housing development policy (Proposed 2009)
- Decent Homes Policy (Proposed 2009)
- Housing Market Renewal Intervention Strategy (Proposed 2009)