



St.Helens
Council

ST HELENS COUNCIL
FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY

Reviewed April 2019

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Executive Summary

St.Helens Fuel Poverty Strategy sets out the context and challenges to be faced with regard to reducing fuel poverty in the borough.

Building upon the achievements of previous strategies, it confirms the Council's continued commitment to tackle the problem of fuel poverty, taking into account achievements already made, changes in circumstances and the national agenda, together with new ideas and opportunities.

The key objectives of this strategy are to reduce the proportion of St Helens residents' income spent on fuel, and to permanently increase the energy efficiency of homes in the borough in order to reduce fuel poverty. As such, the strategy helps to fulfill the key corporate priorities of 'Improving People's Lives' and 'Creating a Better Place'

The fundamental solutions to fuel poverty remain unchanged from the original strategy and are as follows:

- To provide Information, Education & Advice on Affordable Warmth;
- To Work together to achieve Affordable Warmth;
- To Reduce Fuel Poverty by Maximising Income;
- To Improve Health & Well Being through Affordable Warmth;
- To Improve Energy Efficiency to achieve Affordable Warmth.

Also included within the strategy is the Councils response's to the Home Energy Conservation Act, which requires authorities to provide a report to Government every two years on actions taken to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty.

This strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and the action plan updated as necessary.

1. Introduction

Fuel Poverty is a problem which affects many of St Helen's least affluent and most vulnerable residents. It has a wide range of significant negative impacts on quality of life including mental and physical health implications and fuel debt problems.

The core aim of this strategy is to reduce the amount which St Helens residents spend on fuel bills and permanently increase the quality and energy efficiency of homes in the borough.

Fuel Poverty is broadly defined as households on lower incomes living in a home which cannot be kept warm at reasonable cost. It is usually a result of four interacting factors: low household income, low energy efficiency standard of the property, high fuel prices and under-occupation of homes.

Fuel poverty is a real issue for thousands of St.Helens households who are struggling to pay their fuel bills and keep their homes warm. In the face of continuing high fuel prices, more households are likely to fall into fuel poverty and this has a direct effect on the health of St Helens residents with a resulting higher cost implication for social / medical care and the wider local economy.

In terms of physical housing improvements, the Council has focused on energy efficiency issues over many years. However, the Council is aware that physical improvement of the housing stock alone will not eradicate fuel poverty. At a time when public sector finance is coming under increasing strain, much emphasis rests on raising awareness of issues surrounding fuel poverty and using partnership working as much as possible to help our most vulnerable residents to take advantage of assistance which is already available.

It is clear that there are challenges ahead, but we are committed to doing what we can to reduce the number of people suffering from fuel poverty. The associated action plan on pages 27 - 33 sets out how the Council will tackle predicted increasing fuel poverty levels within the Borough.

2. Causes and Effects of Fuel Poverty

There are four main causes of fuel poverty:

- Poor energy efficiency in the home
- High energy prices (including the inability to access cheaper fuel)
- Low household income
- Under-occupancy of homes

Poor energy efficiency

The energy efficiency of housing is measured by a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating. SAP operates on a ratings scale of 1 to 100, with 100 being the most energy efficient. Energy efficiency measures, such as cavity wall and loft insulation, and efficient central heating systems improve energy inefficiency. An inefficient property can cost four times as much to heat as one built to current building regulations.

High energy prices

For some households, the cost of fuel is prohibitively high relative to their income. This has been exacerbated by steep rises in fuel prices in recent years. The cost of fuel can be addressed to some extent by helping householders take advantage of the competitive energy market by changing to a cheaper fuel supplier.

Low household income

Some households cannot afford to heat their home to an adequate standard. Raising household income is one of the main ways to tackle fuel poverty. Income can be raised by promoting employment initiatives or benefits uptake.

Under-occupancy

A dwelling which is unnecessarily large for the occupants can result in difficulties in heating the dwelling affordably. Under-occupancy typically occurs in households where children have left the family home. It is difficult to address as people do not necessarily want to leave their family home even if they can be re-housed into a smaller unit.

The primary effects of fuel poverty are:

- Fuel debt (as the householder tries to maintain a satisfactory heating regime)
- Not adequately heating the home (in order to minimize fuel bills)

Fuel debt consequences may include;

- Negative impacts on mental health (depression, anxiety)
- Non payment of other bills including council tax and rent
- Choice between heating and eating healthy food

Consequences of not adequately heating the home may include;

- Impacts on physical and mental health including excess winter mortality
- Condensation, dampness and mould growth
- Deterioration of the property with higher maintenance costs
- Increased health expenditure due to additional GP appointments and hospital admissions

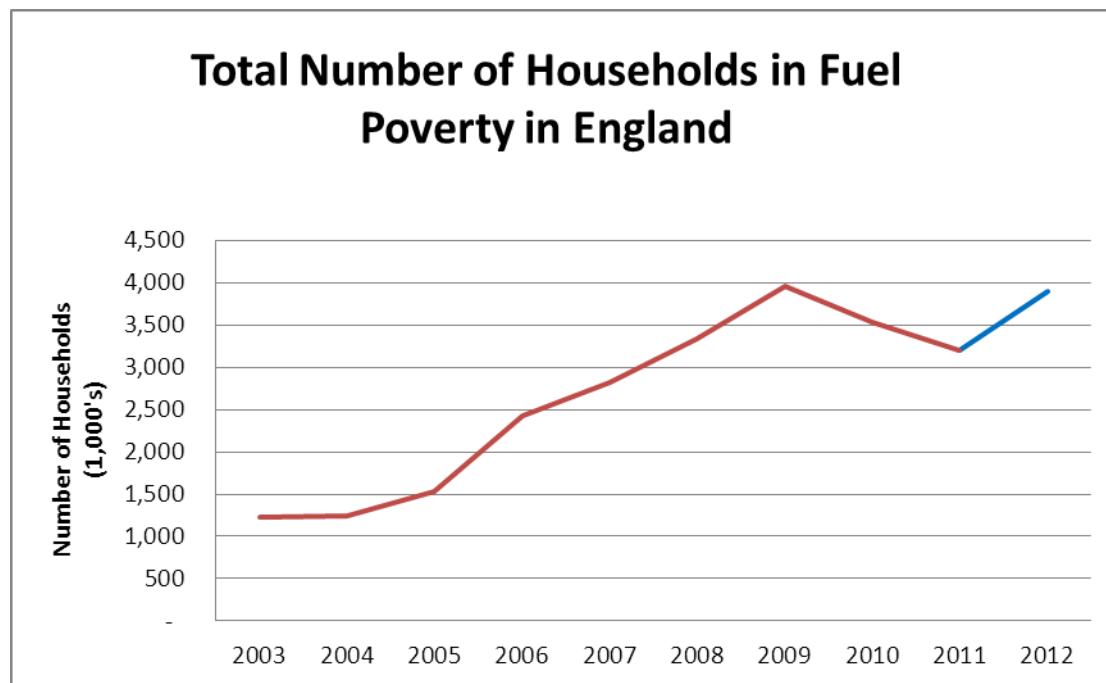
3. Background – A Fuel Poverty Overview

3.1 National Context

In 2001 the Government published its first fuel poverty strategy with a target to eradicate fuel poverty amongst vulnerable groups by 2010 and in all households by 2016. However, the number of fuel poor households has actually increased (see Figure 1).

The latest Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) estimate gives a figure in excess of 3.2 million fuel poor households in England, slightly lower than in 2010 when there were estimated to be just over 3.5 million, but greatly increased from the 2003 estimate of 1.25 million.

Figure 1 - Trends in Fuel Poverty in England



(Data Source: - DECC Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2013
- NEA projection 2012

Between 2003 and 2011 there has been a series of substantial increases in gas and electricity prices, leading to a rise in the average annual household fuel bill to around £1300 by summer 2011 (Ofgem 2011). Fuel prices and the inability of households to access cheaper energy are the main reasons for recent levels of fuel poverty. The Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) estimates that for every 1% rise in energy prices, an extra 40,000 households become fuel poor.

National Energy Action (NEA) projections for England indicate there were likely to have been around 3.9 million fuel poor households in 2012. It is unlikely that the upward trend will differ in 2013 as fuel costs continue to rise.

Current and previous figures for the numbers in fuel poverty are based on the following definition:

A household is said to be in fuel poverty if it spends 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. This broad definition of fuel costs also includes modeled spending on water heating, lights, appliances and cooking.

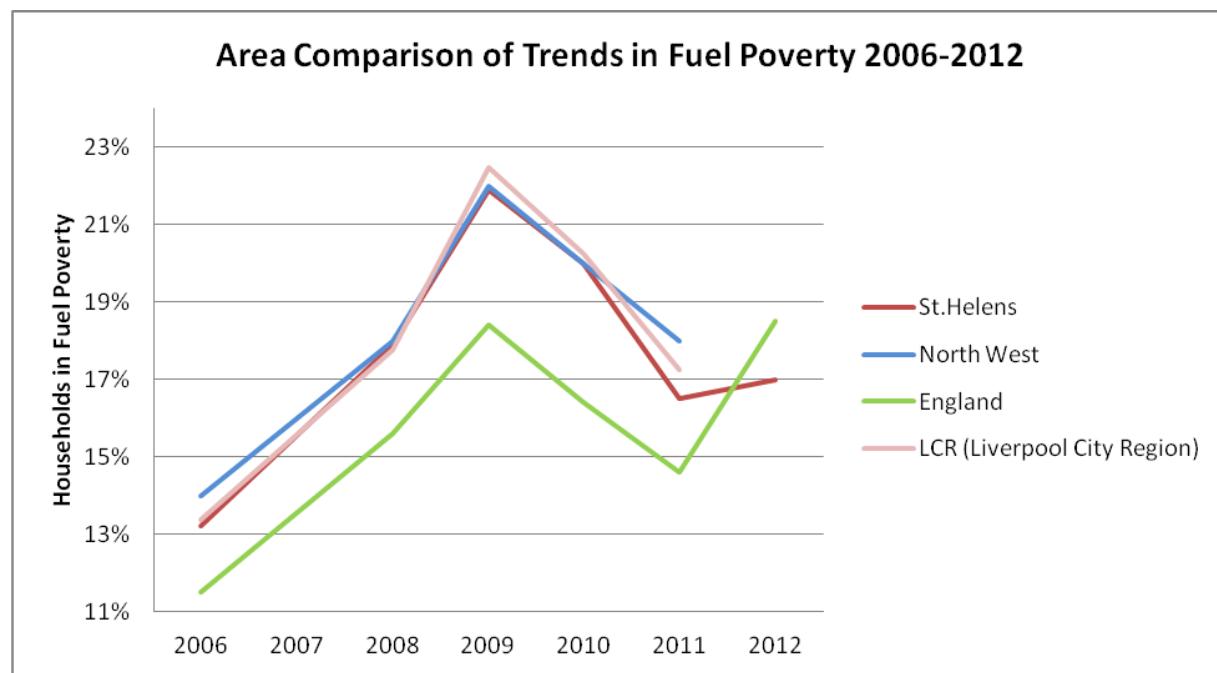
In July 2013 the Government proposed a new definition of Fuel Poverty and this is discussed in more detail in Section 7.

3.2 Sub Regional

There has been a substantial amount of work undertaken across the Liverpool City Region (LCR) to improve the energy efficiency of homes and to reduce the number fuel poor households, with the majority works being undertaken via the Warm Front Scheme and the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target between the years of 2008 to 2011, and by Helena Partnerships, the Council and other providers in the public sector.

LCR authorities are working with local partners and registered housing providers through the Viridis project with a shared ambition to maximise the investment made in the region via the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and to share best practice with regards to energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

Figure 2 - Fuel Poverty Trends - National, Regional and Local



(Data Source: DECC Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2013, BRE 2013)

Figure 2 above shows a reduction in fuel poverty in the Liverpool City Region between 2009 and 2011, echoing the national situation. Fuel poverty in the LCR and the North West is significantly higher than the rest of the country. Figures for 2012 are yet to be published by DECC however National Energy Action (NEA), the national charity which aims to eradicate fuel poverty, has projected a sharp rise in England. The figure for St.Helens in 2012 has been estimated using a stock model produced by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) on behalf of St.Helens Council and also shows an increase in fuel poverty levels.

3.3 St Helens – Where are we now?

Population / Social Demographics

St Helens Council is a metropolitan unitary authority with a population of 175,308, 75,736 households and 81,149 dwellings. It is situated within Merseyside and is one of six Local Authorities within the Liverpool City Region. The majority of the population is located within the town of St Helens and its surrounding suburbs, with relatively little rural population.

Table 1- Housing and Households Data (Census 2011)

Housing & Households 2011	St Helens		Liverpool City Region	North West	England
Household Composition	Number	%	%	%	%
Occupied households	75,736	-	-	-	-
Households with dependent children all ages	22,020	29.1	28.0	28.8	29.1
Lone parent households with dependent children	6,456	8.5	9.5	8.1	7.1
Households where all persons are age 65+	16,730	22.1	21.1	20.9	20.8
One person households age 65+	9,947	13.1	13.4	12.8	12.4

(Data Source: ONS 2013)

The latest Census data indicates that St Helens has a higher than average incidence of elderly and lone parent households. Since 2002 the number of people aged 65 and over has increased by almost a fifth and now people in this age group make up 19% of the population. The number of very elderly people aged 85 and over has also increased and now makes up 2% of the Borough population. Population projections indicate that the ageing population is set to continue, with the proportion of older people in St Helens likely to increase at a faster rate than the national average.

Census data also shows that 22.7% of the St Helens population have a limiting long term condition. This is defined by the Department of Health as 'a health problem that cannot be cured but can be controlled by medication or other therapies' and includes conditions such as diabetes, heart disease or asthma. The figure for St Helens is significantly higher than the England average of 16.9%.

Housing Stock

Housing stock within St Helens is typical for an industrial North West town, with a predominance of traditional, pre 1930s solid wall terraced and interwar semi detached houses, and relatively few flats / high rise accommodation. The key features of the Borough's housing stock are:

- 18% of all dwellings in the Borough were constructed pre 1930
- 29% of homes are terraced properties, 48% semi detached, 9% detached and 5% flat type accommodation
- 2% of homes in the Borough do not have central heating
- Over 7% of dwellings are solid wall construction
- There are high concentrations of private rented homes in pre 1930 terraced stock
- 16% of homes do not meet the minimum statutory standard (has 1 or more HHSRS Category 1 Hazard)
- The level of Disrepair in the private rented sector is 36%, substantially higher than the Borough average of 6%.
- The Borough incidence of Excess Cold is relatively low, at 1%

Table 2 - St Helens Stock Modeled Data 2013

Tenure	Dwellings	HHSRS Category 1 Hazards			Disrepair	Fuel Poverty	Low Income Households	Simple SAP Score
		All Hazards	Excess Cold	Fall Hazards				
Owner Occupied	56,099	11,807 (21%)	669 (1%)	9,079 (4%)	2,067 (4%)	10,081 (18%)	13,253 (24%)	60
Private Rented	8,030	1,168 (15%)	138 (2%)	570 (7%)	2,874 (36%)	2,156 (27%)	3,832 (48%)	60
Social	17,020	98 (1%)	59 (0%)	35 (0%)	15 (0%)	1,536 (9%)	15,942 (94%)	73
St Helens Borough	81,149	13,073 (16%)	866 (1%)	9,684 (12%)	4,956 (6%)	13,773 (17%)	33,027 (41%)	63
2009 EHS (England all stock)		(21%)	(8%)	(12%)	(6%)	(18%)	(30%)	53
2011 DECC (England all stock)						(14.6%)		

(Source; BRE St Helens Stock Model 2013)

During 2013, the British Research Establishment (BRE) carried out a housing stock modeling exercise, together with a health impact assessment, in order for the Council and other partners to have access to updated stock information and have a better understanding of potential issues and future demands. Table 2 summarises some of the main findings. The modeled data for St Helens shows that 17% of all households are estimated to be fuel poor under the existing fuel poverty criteria (more than 10% of household income spent on fuel). This contrasts starkly with the Excess Cold figures for St Helens stock of 1%. The difference

is explained by the large number of households on low income at 27%. It is important to recognize that whilst nearly all St Helens housing stock passes Excess Cold, this is a minimum standard, and to a family on low income, merely providing minimum level of energy efficiency will not be enough to mitigate risk of fuel poverty and associated health consequences.

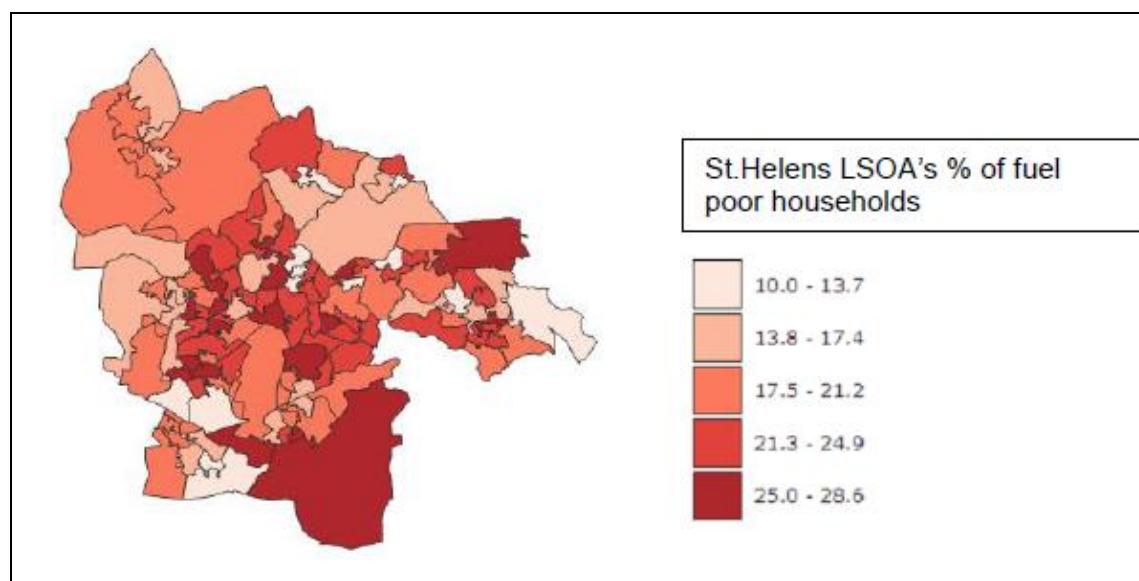
Deprivation and Fuel Poverty

St Helens is ranked as the 51st most deprived local authority in England (out of 326) according to the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Inequality is not evenly distributed across the Borough with some areas, particularly the center and south of the Borough, with very high rates of deprivation.

Despite continued efforts to reduce the levels of Fuel Poverty in St.Helens the problem is still considerable. Table 2 above shows a current level of Fuel Poverty for St Helens Borough of 17%, this being significantly higher than the latest DECC national estimate of 14.6 % provided for 2011. There are now in excess of 13,000 households in the borough that could be faced with the hard decision to spend their limited income on heating or to buy other essentials and live in a cold home.

Fuel poverty levels also vary significantly across the Borough. Figure 3 shows the St.Helens 2010 levels of fuel poverty by Lower Super Output Area (LSOA). This variation across the Borough shows similar trends to those of deprivation and child poverty.

Figure 3 – Percentage of St Helens fuel poor households by LSOA



Data source: DECC Sub-regional Fuel Poverty Statistics

The BRE stock modelling analysis identified a significantly high prevalence of fuel poverty in the private rented sector with 27% of properties unable to heat their homes effectively. In comparison, the level of fuel poverty in the social housing sector in St.Helens is relatively low at 9%. It is interesting to note that the level of fuel poverty in St Helens is perhaps much

lower than could be expected, given the very high levels of low income households in the Borough. This is an indication that the thermal efficiency of the Borough's Housing stock, which has a better SAP score and lower incidence of 'Excess Cold' Hazards than the national average, is playing a major role in the mitigation of fuel poverty. This is particularly apparent with the Borough's Social Housing Stock, which despite the incidence of low income households being 94%, has the lowest fuel poverty incidence of 9% whilst the stock is the most thermally efficient, averaging a SAP score of 73 and with minimal Excess Cold hazards.

4. Fuel Poverty – The Health and Cost Impact of Cold Homes

4.1 Excess Winter Morbidity and Health Impairment

There is a strong relationship between poor health and deprivation, with those people living in deprived areas more likely to suffer from long-term conditions and to have a shorter life expectancy than people from more affluent areas. The condition of the housing stock also has a direct correlation with health outcomes and this, combined with a household's inability to heat their home due to fuel poverty, can be extremely detrimental to health.

There is a large body of evidence proving the link between cold homes and poor health. Many recent documents published confirm this, in particular:

- The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty (2011) – Written by the Marmot Review Team for Friends of the Earth;
- Fuel Poverty: The problem and its measurement, The Interim Report of the Fuel Poverty Review, John Hills (2011);
- Getting the measure of fuel poverty: Final Report of the Fuel Poverty Review, John Hills (2012);
- Cold Weather Plan for England 2013

The following groups are particularly vulnerable to experiencing fuel poverty:

- Older people, particularly those living alone
- Families with dependent children, particularly single parents
- Those individuals living with disabilities
- Those individuals living with long term and terminal illnesses.

Vulnerable groups of people are affected in different ways and can spend a higher than average proportion of time within their home environment. The elderly and those with long-term sickness or disabilities are particularly vulnerable to direct health impacts, such as heart attacks, strokes, respiratory disease, influenza, falls and injuries, and hypothermia. Low temperatures are associated with diminished resistance to infections and the incidence of damp and mould in the home. These health impacts can be described as Excess Winter Morbidity (EWM).

Table 3 – The Effect of Indoor Temperature on Health

Indoor temperature	Effect
21°C (70°F)	Minimum recommended daytime temperature for rooms occupied during the day
18°C (65°F)	Minimum recommended night-time bedroom temperature. No health risks, though occupants may feel cold
Under 16°C (61°F)	May diminish resistance to respiratory diseases
9–12°C (48–54°F)	May increase blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular disease
5°C (41°F)	Poses a high risk of hypothermia

(Source: Cold Weather Plan for England 2013, Public Health England)

Table 3 summarises the increased health risk due to diminishing temperatures in the home.

There are also many indirect impacts of fuel poverty and living in cold homes such as mental health problems through social isolation and exclusion, stress and anxiety, anti social behaviour and poor educational attainment.

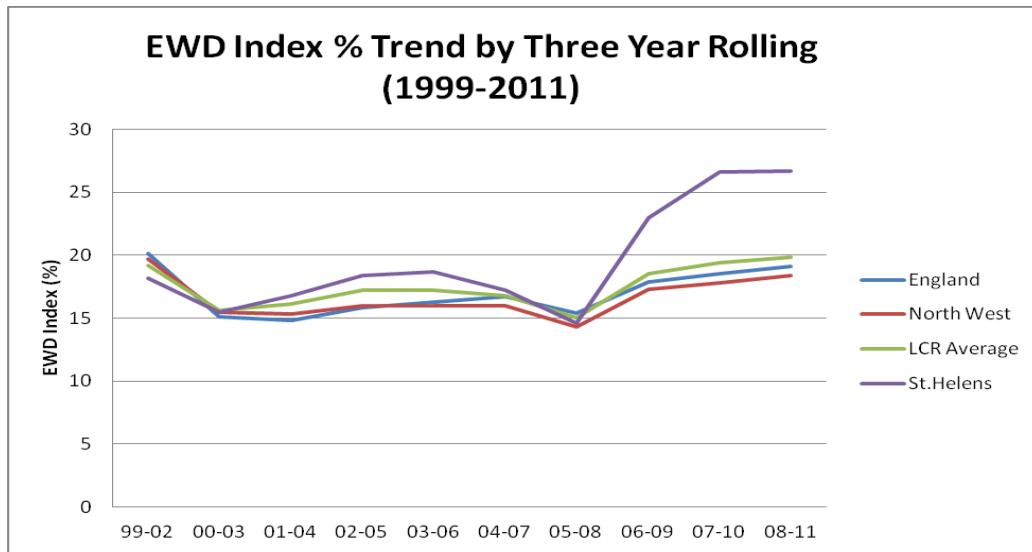
4.2 Excess Winter Deaths

Ultimately living in a cold home can result in death, the UK has one of the worst Excess Winter Death (EWD) rates in Europe - even colder Scandinavian countries have relatively fewer excess winter deaths in winter compared to the UK. It is estimated that for every 1°C that the winter temperature drops below the average, there will be an associated increase of 8,000 excess winter deaths. Excess Winter Deaths do not only occur to older people but also include children, in England and Wales in 2011/12 there were 110 excess winter deaths among children. This means that 7.9% more children died in the winter months than in other times during that period.

The Office for National Statistics calculates excess winter deaths (EWD) as the difference between the number of deaths in December – March and the average of deaths in the preceding August – November and the following April – July.

The EWD Index measures excess winter deaths expressed as a percentage, in order that comparisons can be made easily between different geographical areas. Figure 4 highlights how severe the problem is locally, for 2009-2011. St.Helens has the 18th highest EWD Index in England.

Figure 4 - EWD Index - National, Regional and Local Trends

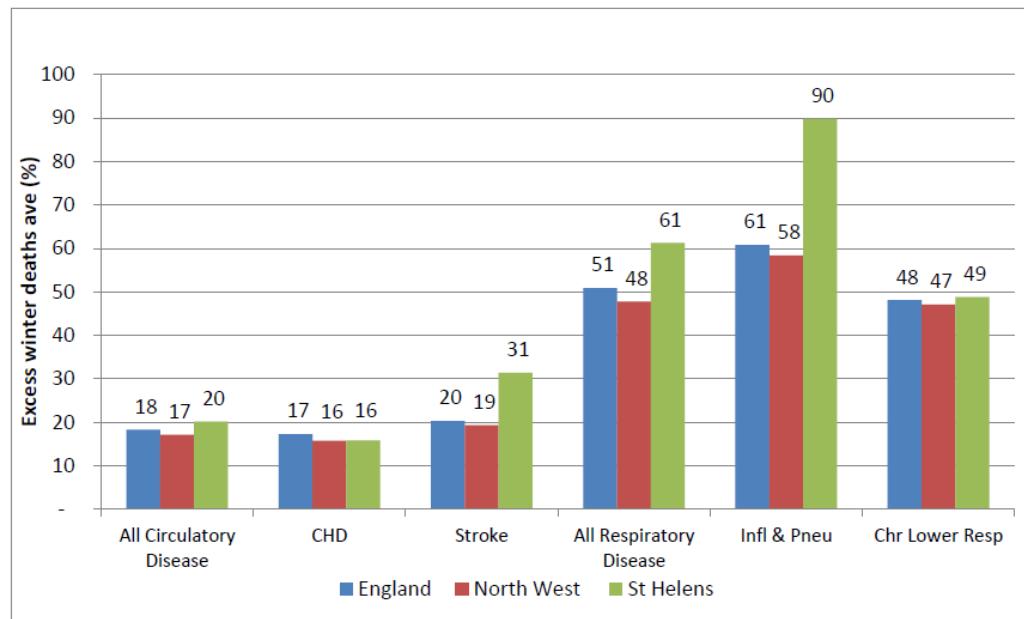


Data Source: Atlas produced by the West Midlands Public Health Observatory on behalf of the Public Health Observatories in England 2013

Public Health Observatory data identified that there are approximately 144 excess winter deaths each year in St Helens based on 2009 -2011 data. This equates to an extra 26.7% chance of death across these three winters.

It is estimated that around half of excess winter deaths may be due to indoor temperatures and half to outdoor temperatures. Recent analysis attributes about a fifth of excess winter deaths to living in cold homes. The Hills Fuel Poverty Review concludes that half of this figure could be due to fuel poverty. In 2012/13 an estimated 31,100 excess winter deaths occurred in England and Wales. That would equate to 3,110 preventable deaths due to fuel poverty and from December 2012 to March 2013 each day 25 people will have died as a result of being unable to heat their home. Each of these deaths will be associated with a much greater number of non-fatal health conditions and subsequent demands on the NHS and social care services.

Fig 5 - Excess Winter Deaths by condition (2004-2011)



Source: St.Helens Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Update 2013

Fig 5. Includes data on Excess Winter Deaths by condition. Over half of Excess Winter Deaths are from cardiovascular disease and a third from respiratory disease. By age group, excess winter deaths in St Helens between 2004 and 2011 were highest amongst residents aged 85 years and older (30%).

4.3 The Health Impact and Cost of Fuel Poverty and Poor Housing

Living at low temperatures is a significant contributor to a large number of incidents of ill-health and demands on the National Health Service and wider social care.

The total cost to the NHS and the country for treating cold related illness due to cold housing is unknown; however the following statement was made in the Chief Medical Officer Report 2009.

"The annual cost to the NHS of treating winter related disease due to cold private housing is £859 million. This does not include additional spending by social services, or economic losses through missed work. The total costs to the NHS and the country are unknown. A recent study showed that investing £1 in keeping homes warm saved the NHS 42 pence in health costs..." [Chief Medical Officer Report, 2009]. The 'Cost of Cold' report published by Age UK in November 2012 updated the cost to the NHS to £1.36 per annum.

The impact of fuel poverty is profound:

- More than 1 in 4 adolescents living in cold homes are at risk of mental health problems.
- They are less likely to have a good diet.
- Infants show poorer weight gain.
- Children and young people have increased hospital admissions.
- More are at risk of accidents in the home.
- The effects do not just occur in health – cold homes are related to decreased educational attainment, emotional well-being and resilience.

[Source: Chief Medical Officer Annual Report, 2012]

A Health Impact Assessment into the costs of poor housing, including fuel poverty in St Helens was carried out by NHS Halton & St Helens in October 2012. This report concluded that the cost to the NHS of excess cold amongst St Helens households aged 65+ was over £3m.

The St Helens Joint Strategic Needs Assessment has highlighted the challenge posed by fuel poverty and its effect on health and the social care needs of the St Helens population.

The link between fuel poverty and poor health outcomes has been recognized by the St Helens Health and Wellbeing Board and work towards mitigating fuel poverty is recognized as a contributor towards key aims within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, namely

- Reduction of unnecessary hospital admissions and readmissions
- Promoting mental health and wellbeing

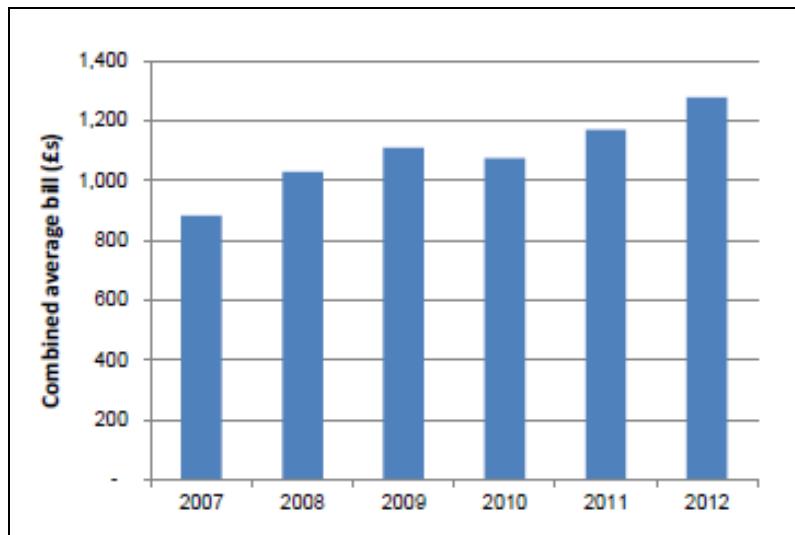
5. Future Trends and Challenges

5.1 Fuel Prices

Fuel prices and inability of households to access cheaper energy are the main reasons for recent rising levels of fuel poverty. The Department for Business, Enterprise and regulatory Reform (BERR) estimates that for every 1% rise in energy prices, an extra 40,000 households become fuel poor.

Fuel prices have continued to rise since 2007, bills having grown by approximately £400 which is a 45% increase. These figures from DECC are based on an annual consumption of 3,300 kWh for standard electricity and 18,000 kWh for gas. There is no evidence to suggest that fuel costs will reduce significantly in the near future.

Fig 6 - Average UK combined gas and electricity bills 2007 to 2012



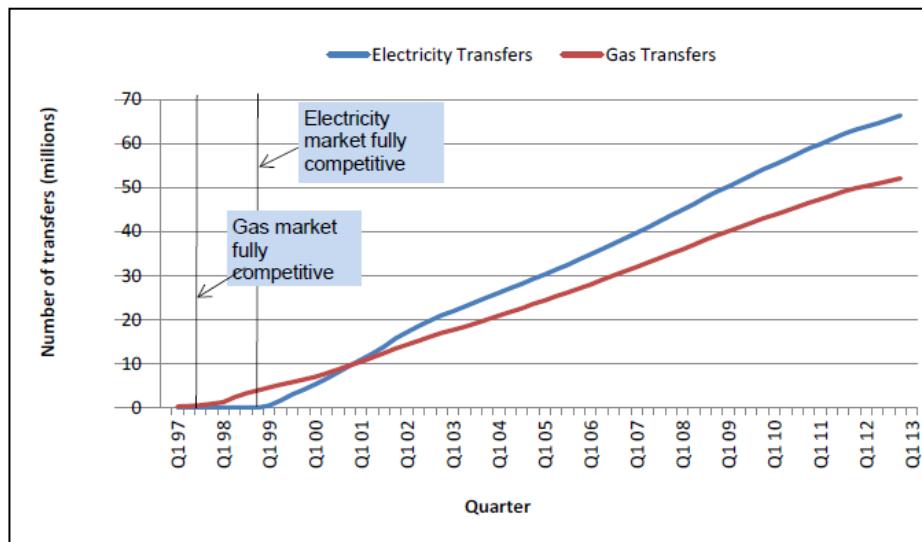
(Source: DECC Quarterly Energy Prices 2013)

Despite recent Government attempts to intervene, the complexity of the current energy market, with a multitude of tariffs and payment options, compounds the issue. For example, households using a pre-payment meter or quarterly billing usually pay more for their energy than those paying by monthly direct debit. Ofgem is now moving to reduce the pre-payment meter price differential.

Whilst the Council and its partners cannot directly influence energy prices, they can play an important role to ensure that local households take advantage of any schemes that reduce energy costs such as collective energy switching schemes and direct discounts such as the Warm Homes Discount Scheme.

Despite rising fuel prices, householders can still benefit from switching their fuel supplier to obtain the most competitive rates for their circumstances. Research from Uswitch showed that consumers could save up to £350 by switching supplier. Although the number of households' now switching supplier is rising there are still many households that have not switched and could make substantial savings on their energy bills.

Fig 7. Cumulative numbers of gas and electricity transfers



(Source: DECC, Annex to the Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2013)

5.2 Deprivation and Low Incomes

The current climate of austerity, combined with the rising cost of living raises concerns about poverty and inequality within the Borough. The national welfare reform programme is also likely to have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of St Helens' residents. The overall impact is difficult to calculate at this stage, but estimates produced by Sheffield Hallam University suggest that St Helens could lose £71m in benefits coming into the Borough per year. There were to be over forty changes to the welfare system between January 2011 and October 2013 and these will have a cumulative effect, with many households likely to be affected by more than one reform. Welfare reforms are likely to have a direct effect on fuel poverty, with increased households experiencing a reduction in benefits / income faced with stark decisions about whether to heat or eat.

Partners from across the Borough are working together to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms upon communities and to make sure that residents understand the changes to the benefits system and how they will be affected. The Council's Home Improvement Agency provides access to benefits checks and can signpost vulnerable clients to a range of Council and external agencies / partners in order to access support.

5.3 Energy Efficiency / Behavioural Change

The improvements in energy efficiency that have been achieved across all housing tenures in recent year are significant and welcome and have played their part in reducing what may have been much higher levels of fuel poverty. Improving household energy efficiency must be an important component of any successful fuel poverty strategy. Further improvements to housing energy efficiency will continue to keep fuel bills lower than they otherwise would be, make homes warmer, healthier to live in, and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

However, it is recognized that there are still significant barriers towards improving the thermal efficiency of housing stock and in particular the retro fitting of extensive and disruptive improvements such as solid wall insulation. Whilst new Government funding regimes such as Green Deal and ECO (see Section 6.3) are intended to address some of the financial barriers, these schemes are currently in their early stages and initial uptake across the country has been poor. These schemes are complex to understand and access and it is acknowledged that the Council and its partners will need to provide or direct households towards impartial advice and assistance in order to maximize potential take up. In the current economic climate, direct grant assistance from the Council can not be guaranteed and any financial assistance which the Council provides most ensure provision to a small number of households in greatest need due to fuel poverty and health related issues.

The main driver towards improving thermal efficiency and reducing energy usage remains with the individual householders and is reliant, not only on their investment in energy efficiency improvements and appliances, but on usage of heating and electrical appliances in a manner which minimizes energy use.

The Council and its partners have a key role in assisting the provision and delivery of advice and information regarding a wide range of energy saving measures and behaviours. This is particularly important given the background of increasing energy prices and reduction in household incomes as it can often be small behavioural changes that can result in a reduction in energy bills.

The Council is therefore aware that physical improvement of the housing stock alone will not eradicate fuel poverty and acknowledges that more needs to be done to promote greater household awareness of energy consumption and income maximization to help the less well off to heat their homes economically and efficiently.

6. Policy Context - National

6.1 Energy Act 2013

The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 required the Government to publish a strategy setting out proposals to end fuel poverty in England within a fifteen-year period. The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy, published in November 2001, committed the Government to ending fuel poverty for vulnerable households by 2010 and for all households by 2016. The target of eliminating fuel poverty was, however, qualified by the provision 'as far as

'reasonably practicable', it is clear that this target will not be achieved and new targets need to be set.

In July 2013 the Government published a framework for future action in tackling fuel poverty in England, within which the proposed amendments to the definition of fuel poverty were put forward and indications of the form of future targets i.e. measuring progress against either an average or a minimum standard for energy efficiency for fuel poor households.

The Energy Act received Royal Assent in December 2013 and set a new statutory target to "*ensure that as many fuel poor homes in England as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band C by 2030*". The Government published a new national Fuel Poverty strategy, "Cutting the cost of keeping warm" in March 2015 with the aim of providing a framework through which to deliver this target. The Strategy also sets the following interim milestones:

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

The national strategy seeks to build on partnerships with the NHS, with potential to develop 'GP prescription' initiatives. The Council, through our current strong partnership and funding relationships with Public Health and Social Care, is therefore in a strong position to access any such initiatives as they are developed.

6.2 HECA

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995 recognises local authorities' ability to use their position to significantly improve the energy efficiency of all residential accommodation in their areas.

In July 2012 the Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC) published a requirement under HECA for all local authorities in England to report on the measures they propose to take to achieve this aim. DECC set a deadline of 31 March 2013 to prepare the first of these reports, known as a 'Further Report'. Subsequent reports known as progress reports must be published at two-year intervals following this date up to and including 31st March 2027. St.Helens Council's further HECA report (2013) can be viewed online at the web address below.

<http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/hecareport>

Within the Further HECA Report (2013) St Helens Council produced an action plan setting out intentions to improve the energy efficiency of households with specific reference to how existing Government initiatives were to be utilised locally. Many of the actions have a direct impact on reducing the levels of fuel poverty in the Borough.

The 2015 update to the HECA report is included within this strategy (appendix 2) and can be viewed online at the above website address.

6.3 Government National Initiatives to Improve Energy Efficiency and to Combat Fuel Poverty & Climate Change

Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

ECO takes over from previous obligations to reduce carbon emissions (the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), which expired at the end of 2012. ECO should work alongside the Green Deal finance offer by targeting appropriate measures at those households which are likely to need additional support, in particular those containing vulnerable people on low incomes and those in hard to treat housing. The ECO scheme has been split into three separate obligations:

- Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation (CERO), which mainly provides support to hard to treat housing.
- Carbon Saving Community Obligation (CSCO), which offers support on an area basis targeted at more deprived areas.
- Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation (HHCRO), this element of the ECO provides support to individual households with a propensity to be fuel poor. This scheme replaces the Warm Front scheme, and can provide assistance with energy efficient heating systems as well as standard insulation measures.

Green Deal

The Green Deal is a loan scheme offering homeowners the opportunity to make energy efficiency improvements to their home, bill payers may be able to fund improvements without having to pay any up-front costs. Instead, Green Deal Providers will provide the capital and clients repay the loan via their energy bill. At the heart of the offer is a simple rule: estimated savings on bills will always equal or exceed the cost of the work, therefore in theory the occupant will not be financially worse off.

Government review of Green Levies

Towards the end of 2013 there was public outcry to the continued energy price rises, leading to Government holding talks with energy companies to establish the cause of the rise in fuel costs. The response from Government following the talks was to extend the timescales for energy companies to fulfill their obligations. Although these changes have resulted in a slight reduction to annual fuel bills there have been some significant changes to the energy efficiency work undertaken. An example of this can be seen with the CERO obligation, prior to the changes energy companies offered significant funding for solid wall insulation, following the change energy companies are now focusing on those measures which provide better energy savings per pound spent, such as cavity wall insulation.

Green Deal Home Improvement Fund

Following the Green Levy review, the Government launched an updated cashback scheme in early 2014, with the potential to reimburse up to two thirds cost of eligible works. Funding is

limited and released in tranches, with previous schemes closing within days of launch due to high demand.

Warm Homes Discount

The Warm Homes Discount Scheme came into operation on the 1st April 2011 and is an important element in the Government's strategy for addressing fuel poverty going forward. It is a mandatory scheme under which energy suppliers are required to provide financial support with energy bills to fuel poor and vulnerable low-income households. The Government has recently announced its continued support for the WHD with a budget of £320 million in 2015/16.

Winter Fuel & Cold Weather Payments

Winter Fuel Payment is an annual payment made to all households containing someone over female state pension age. It is intended to provide assurance to older people that they can keep warm during the colder winter months because they know they will receive help with their bills.

Cold Weather Payments provide additional support to many vulnerable people who have to manage on a low income. These payments are paid weekly in very cold winter weather and provide vital support to millions of fuel poor households.

Renewable Energy Initiatives

The Feed-in Tariffs (FITs) scheme was introduced on 1 April 2010 and the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) is expected to be available from spring 2014. Both schemes are designed to provide financial support that encourages individuals, communities and businesses to generate their own electric or switch from using fossil fuel for heating, to renewables such as wood fuel.

Getting a better Energy Deal

Government (through the current Energy Act) and Ofgem (through its Retail Market Review) are currently in the process of reforming the market to ensure that energy companies place consumers on the cheapest tariff that meets their needs. Energy companies must also provide clear information and fewer tariffs making it easier for consumers to get the best deals.

Government also support collective switching schemes where consumers can potentially access cheaper energy through joining together in order to negotiate better deals with energy suppliers.

Smart Meters

There will be a roll out of smart meters to every household in Great Britain. Smart meters will help consumers to manage their energy usage. Through real time displays, households will be able to understand the cost of the energy that they are using.

7 Fuel Poverty – a new Definition

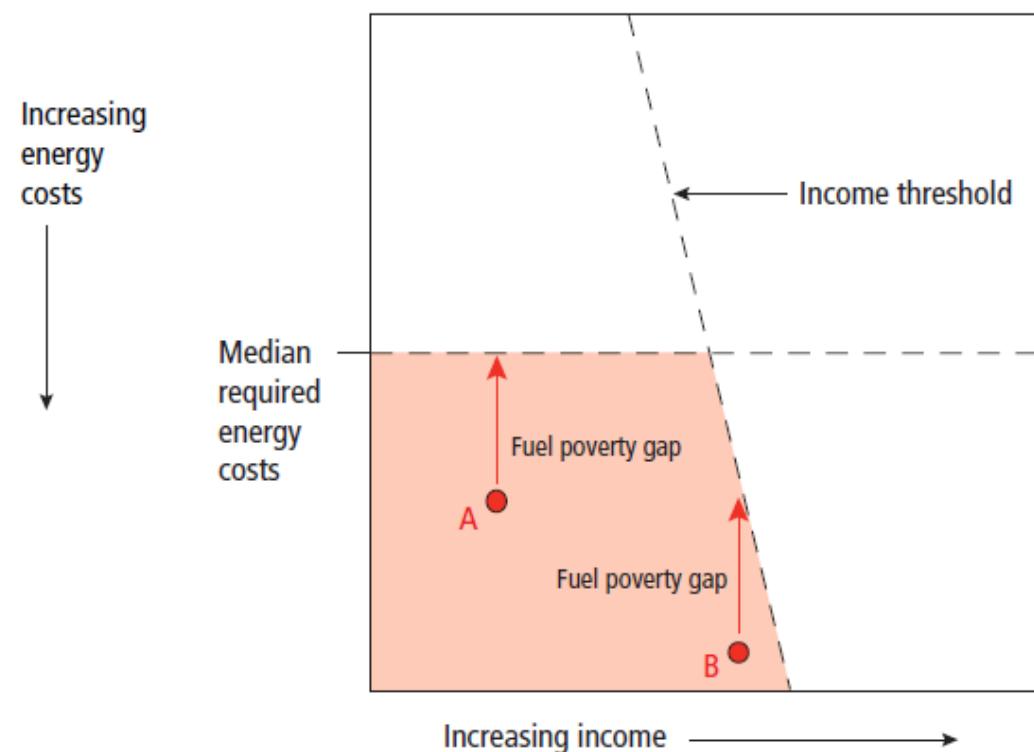
Following the independent review of fuel poverty by Professor Hills, in July 2013 the Government published a framework for future action on fuel poverty which sets out proposals on how the Government intends to measure fuel poverty going forward and the action the Government intends to take to help people who are fuel poor.

The new Low Income High Cost (LIHC) indicator finds a household to be fuel poor if:

- Their income is below the poverty line (taking into account energy costs); and
- Their energy costs are higher than is typical for their household type.

It also uses a fuel poverty gap. This is the difference between a household's modelled energy costs and what their energy costs would need to be for them to no longer be fuel poor, the gap shows the severity of the issue. Figure 8 demonstrates the two indicators LIHC fuel poor homes are in the shaded area and A and B examples of the fuel poverty gap i.e. how much the modeled energy costs would have to reduce to take the home out of fuel poverty. This description of the new LIHC indicator is a simplified version, a full description can be found in the publication Fuel Poverty: a Framework for Future Action (DECC, July 2013)

Figure 8: The low income high costs definition



(Source: Fuel Poverty: a Framework for Future Action (DECC, July 2013)

The LIHC indicator of fuel poverty finds 2.5 million households in England to be fuel poor in 2010, with a total fuel poverty gap of £1 billion or £405 per household in fuel poverty.

The new LIHC definition finds fewer households to be in fuel poverty than under the current 10% definition. An example of this can be seen in the Liverpool City Region (LCR); under the 10% definition in 2011 the average figure for households in Fuel Poverty is 17.3%, whereas under the LIHC definition the average figure is 12.1%. In St.Helens there is a reduction of approximately 5% from the original definition to the new LIHC definition.

To review the issue of fuel poverty on a national, regional and local basis it must be looked at using the previous 10% indicator, due to a lack of available data under the new definition.

A number of professionals / organizations who work with vulnerable clients have expressed concern that the new definition is difficult to explain and may complicate individual assessments of fuel poverty. It is therefore likely that various organizations, including the Council, will continue to use the old definition as well as the new definition for fuel poverty data.

8. The Way Forward

8.1 Achievements to Date

Within the timeframe of the previous strategy there has been a significant amount of work undertaken locally in the pursuit of reducing fuel poverty in St.Helens and achievements were made in all of its aims.

The Affordable Warmth Unit (AWU), now an integral part of St.Helens Council's Home Improvement Agency, has a remit to assist homes to reduce energy costs to enable residents to heat their homes to an adequate level for living in a safe and healthy home.

The AWU has undertaken much of the work locally to assist in reducing Fuel Poverty but this work has not been undertaken in isolation, with many other local organisations and Registered Housing Providers also working to reduce the issue. The statistics below provide an indication of the outcomes of the work undertaken by the AWU and other local partners.

Statistics for St. Helens 2006-2014

Fuel Poverty Reduction (Number of Households) assisted with a measure to reduce fuel poverty.

Year	Target	Outturn
2006/07	550	808
2007/08	550	826
2008/09	550	671
2009/10	550	611
2010/11	550	408
2011/12	550	553
2012/13	500	1221
2013/14	200	296

Improvements in Energy Efficiency (Average SAP*)

Year	Target	Outturn
2006/07	55	54.6
2007/08	53	53.1
2008/09	57	58
2009/10	59	59
2010/11	60	60
2011/12	61	56.17
2012/13	57	57.67
2013/14	58	58.14

*SAP – the Government's Standard Assessment Procedure for Energy Rating of Dwellings. There have been a number of amendments to SAP, both the calculation and the scale, (SAP 1998, SAP 2001, SAP 2005 and the current version SAP 2009) resulting in the reduction in target from 2006/07 – 2007/08 & 2011/12 – 2012/13.

The St Helens HECA Progress Report 2015 (Appendix 2) provides more detail of achievements and activities between March 2013 and March 2015.

The St Helens Fuel Poverty Strategy, together with the Council's HECA Report recognizes the importance of partnership working between the Council and a range of organizations and agencies in order to maximize energy efficiency and mitigate fuel poverty. The Council continues to have a key enabling and co-ordinating role across a range of services and initiatives.

Partners that we are currently working with include:

- Age UK Mid Mersey
- CAB
- St.Helens Carers Centre
- St.Helens Senior Voice Forum
- Helena Partnerships
- Viridis and LCR Registered Providers
- REECH
- Caribou
- Energy Projects Plus
- LCR Local Authorities
- NEA
- Stroke Association
- Mind
- St.Helens Coalition for Disabled People
- Deafness Resource Centre
- Pilkington Family Trust
- Mersey Fire Service
- Public Health

8.2 Consultation and Strategy Review

A wide range of stakeholders have been consulted as part of the review of this fuel poverty strategy (see Appendix 1). The outcomes from the public consultations were very positive and have highlighted that the work currently being undertaken to reduce fuel poverty is still considered to be the best/most appropriate course of action for the Council to follow. Specific ideas have been incorporated/investigated as part of the strategy action plan.

The Council held a Fuel Poverty Conference on 31 January 2014 and also supports a Fuel Poverty Focus Group, the members of which come from a range of organizations and meets on a regular basis in order to discuss and contribute to the Council's strategic aims with regard to fuel poverty. The Council's Senior Affordable Warmth Officer will be responsible for producing action plan progress reports to be conveyed to the St.Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group. Fuel Poverty Strategy updates will also be produced to ensure that where there have been changes to policy, available sources of funding or other fundamental circumstances this is reflected in the document and action plan. Where possible, it is expected that this review will coincide with the associated HECA reports which are due for review every two years following publication of the first report in March 2013.

8.3 Other Strategic Links

The St. Helens Fuel Poverty Strategy will contribute in the delivery of the St. Helens Plan 2011-2014 and associated strategic indicators from a number of Council Departments. This is due to the direct and indirect benefits of improving the thermal comfort of dwellings, educating people about energy efficiency, promoting cheaper energy tariffs, and increasing household incomes.

St Helens Plan

There are a number of priorities for improvement within the St.Helens Plan that actions from this strategy will contribute towards, these include:

Section 3 – Improving Peoples Lives

- Improving health and reducing health inequalities so that local people live longer.
- Improving the health and well being of children and young people.
- Improving the educational attainment of children and young people.
- Supporting vulnerable adults to improve their quality of life and to live independently.

Section 4 – Creating a better Place

- Delivering high-quality housing and housing support that meets local needs.
- Reducing our carbon footprint and impact on the environment.

Public Health, Social Care & NHS Outcome Frameworks

Tackling fuel poverty is a specific outcome within the public health outcomes framework. It also cuts across many domains of the Social Care and NHS Outcomes Frameworks.

Health & Well-being

The St.Helens Health and Wellbeing Board, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the local Public Health department present a new opportunity for effective partnership working at a local level to assist in reducing Fuel Poverty. This Fuel Poverty strategy will also contribute to a number of priorities within the local Health & Well-being Strategy, by providing better warmer healthier homes and thereby reducing excess winter morbidity and mortality.

9. The St Helens Fuel Poverty Strategy 2015-19 Action Plan

The Fuel Poverty Action Plan for St Helens for 2015-18 is set out at the rear of this document. The aims have not changed from the previous fuel poverty strategy, namely:

- Aim 1: To provide Information, Education & Advice on Affordable Warmth;
- Aim 2: To Work together to achieve Affordable Warmth;
- Aim 3: To Reduce Fuel Poverty by Maximising Income;
- Aim 4: To Improve Health & Well Being through Affordable Warmth;
- Aim 5: To Improve Energy Efficiency to achieve Affordable Warmth.

It is recognized that low-income consumers in the private sector are invariably concentrated in the least energy efficient housing. Action to address the energy efficiency of these dwellings is the most sustainable way of eradicating fuel poverty. However, given the scale of the challenge presented by spiraling fuel costs and the expected reduction in public spending, a shift towards advice and income maximization and continued partnership working is an effective way of reducing the numbers of fuel poor households in the borough. This approach was recognized during the consultation undertaken as part of the strategy review.

The following action plan should be read in conjunction with the Council's HECA Progress Report 2015 (Appendix 2) and provides further detail with regard to actions required to mitigate fuel poverty, in accordance with the St Helens Fuel Poverty Strategy key objectives.

St. Helens Council Fuel Poverty Strategy Action Plan

Aim 1: To provide Information, Education & Advice on Affordable Warmth

Objective / Justification	Action	Milestones	Responsibility	Funding	Timescales
1. Promote the benefits of warmer healthier homes	Continue to attend community groups and events to promote assistance, throughout the year and not just in winter	Attend ten groups/events annually	Senior Affordable Warmth Project Officer (SAWPO)	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Investigate ways of providing advice to hard to reach groups i.e. via care agencies and nurseries	To make contact with adult & children's agencies	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
2. Encourage local participation to utilise energy company initiatives & maximise take up	Obtain and make available up to date information about Government and utility company initiatives e.g. priority service register, Warm Homes Discount, Government initiatives (smart meters)	Promote when available	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Continue to engage with fuel rich householders to improve the thermal efficiency of their homes to future proof against fuel poverty	Promotion of available schemes	SAWPO	External funding	Annual review
3. Raise awareness of fuel poverty issues and solutions.	Take every opportunity to raise awareness of fuel poverty issues & solutions e.g. Internet, Local media, leaflets/fliers and other forms of communication media	Set up marketing plan with Marketing services	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Hold an annual fuel poverty conference to highlight Affordable Warmth solutions and raise the profile of fuel poverty to key decision makers	Hold conference	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual conference
	Support the Fuel Poverty Focus Group	Meet 3 times a year and agree annual work plan	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Ongoing
4. Ensure up to date appropriate advice can be accessed in a number of comprehensible formats to suit each individual's needs	Develop clear and concise information on all aspects of fuel poverty / affordable warmth / energy efficiency suitable for target audiences.	Appropriate and up to date Information made available	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Provide advice on all aspects of energy efficiency and affordable warmth via a freephone phone line.	Review Service Level Agreement with delivery partners	SAWPO / Energy Projects Plus (EPP)	Operational Budgets	Annual review

Aim 2: To Work together to achieve Affordable Warmth

Objective / Justification	Action	Milestones	Responsibility	Funding	Timescales
1. To increase collaboration with local partners, agencies and public services, to enhance the existing referral system	Assess for gaps in current referral system and make provision for their inclusion/adoption by monitoring referrals	Undertake work with the St Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group to assess for gaps in service provision to reduce fuel poverty.	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
2. Sustain a co-coordinated approach in the alleviation of fuel poverty	To demonstrate transparency, and to take account of the views of different groups, consultation will take place through the St Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group prior to new initiatives being instigated	Reports to St Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group	SFPFG / SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
3. Maintain or establish links with housing providers including Registered Providers (RPS) and Private Sector Landlords	Maintain links with RSL's to sustain a coordinated approach to alleviating fuel poverty and provide support when needed. Provide information to private landlords regarding future legislative changes and obligations.	Inform RSL's and Private Landlords of activity To provide appropriate advice at the St.Helens private sector Landlord Forums	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Create new links wherever possible with other housing providers to provide support and advice on reducing fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency of all domestic dwellings within St. Helens	Organise meetings to update on activity	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
4. Share best practice with other bodies that engage in Affordable Warmth work.	Attend local and regional forums / networks e.g. Liverpool City Region HECA Forum, Northwest Carbon Action Network (CAN), National Energy Action (NEA) Fuel Poverty Forum	Attend groups / networks	SAWPO/ St Helens Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Liverpool City Region Authorities, CAN, NEA	Operational and external Budgets	Annual review

Aim 3: To Reduce Fuel Poverty by Maximising Income

Objective / Justification	Action	Milestones	Responsibility	Funding	Timescales
1. Seek to enhance existing partnerships with internal departments and external partners to maximise income levels	Encourage the uptake of benefits to maximise income.	Include income maximisation within Affordable Warmth services	SAWPO / St.Helens HIA	Operational Budgets	Annual review
2. To assist households in lowering their energy bills and to reduce fuel debt	Refer for appropriate support as identified	Advice provided to all appropriate households	SAWPO	Operational Budgets External Funding where available	Annual review
	Assist households to identify the most suitable energy supplier and payment method. Where requested assist with switching	Provide advice to 50 homes annually	SAWPO / EPP	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Undertake collective energy switching campaigns with regional partners	Undertake 2 switches annually	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Promote all utility services for vulnerable/fuel poor customers i.e. Warm Homes Discount, priority services register	200 Enquiries	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Support the roll out of smart meters as appropriate. Provide advice and assistance to householders and maximize the opportunity this presents to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy use.	Work with relevant bodies as required to support roll out of smart meters	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Ongoing review

Aim 4: To Improve Health & Well Being through Affordable Warmth

Objective / Justification	Action	Milestones	Responsibility	Funding	Timescales
1. Maintain and improve links with health related services.	Provide information and advice relating to fuel poverty, including stock condition survey with external organisations to inform Joint Strategic Needs assessment	Link with Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to identify goals	SAWPO / SHIAM	Operational Budgets	Ongoing review
	Work with local health services to undertake winter campaign to provide support and advice to vulnerable homes to assist in reducing excess winter deaths (EWD)	Complete winter campaign	SAWPO / Local Partners	Public Health Funding	Annual review
2. Provide assistance to vulnerable households in emergency situations.	Provide solutions in urgent situations to ensure provision of heating where there is a health impact	Assist people as necessary with particular focus on Winter period	SAWPO / SHIAM / EEO	Operational Budgets	Annual review

Aim 5: To Improve Energy Efficiency to achieve Affordable Warmth

Objective/Justification	Action	Milestones	Responsibility	Funding	Timescales
1. Enhance working relationships with Energy companies & Local Partners to improve energy efficiency of homes	Take full advantage of energy efficiency schemes by working with local partners	Promote available Schemes	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
2. Provide insulation & heating measures to vulnerable households	Assist vulnerable households to access Governments Energy Efficiency schemes	Work with local partners to maximise take up of available schemes	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review
	Provide assistance to vulnerable clients in emergency situations where affordable heating systems	Delivery of Emergency Fund as required subject to available resources	SAWPO / SHIAM	Operational Budgets	Annual review

Objective/ Justification	Action	Milestones	Responsibility	Funding	Timescales
	have failed or are absent				
	Extend Energy Efficiency interventions through the St Helens HIA e.g. tank jackets & draft proofing	Make available	SAWPO / St Helens HIA	Operational Budgets	Ongoing
	Provide advice on all aspects of energy efficiency and affordable warmth via a free phone line.	See Aim 1 Objective 4	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Ongoing, subject to annual review
3. Provide Energy Efficiency advice	Provide Information about renewable technologies and their benefits via advice line and Council website	Information made available on Council and partner websites	EPP / SAWPO /	Operational Budgets	Annual review
4. Provide advice on Renewable technologies and innovative methods of improving the energy efficiency of households	Provide advice on Government Schemes for renewables to general public i.e. Feed in tariffs, Renewable Heat Incentive	Provide advice on available schemes via working with partners and on Council's home energy webpage.	SAWPO	Operational Budgets	Annual review

Action plan reviewed April 2019

HECA REPORTING 2019

Introduction

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 ('HECA') requires all 326 local authorities ('LA's) in England to submit reports to the Secretary of State demonstrating what energy conservation measures they have adopted to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation within that LA's area. This covers measures to improve properties in the owner-occupier, private rented sector, and social rented sector. BEIS uses data submitted through LAs HECA returns to inform policy thinking on energy efficiency, and to build an ongoing picture of local and national energy efficiency policy delivery.

HECA 2019 Reporting Requirements

The Report is to be divided by sections to capture information on a range of key themes:

Headline & Overview

What main strategy and schemes LAs currently have to promote carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency, stakeholders involved and impact at a societal and economic level.

Communication

How LA engage stakeholders (including consumers and businesses) to promote awareness of energy efficiency.

Green Local Supply Chain

How LAs engage local businesses involved in the promotion of energy savings products and the societal benefits alongside any local economic impact this might have.

Private Rental Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

How LAs enforce and promote awareness of the PRS Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards that came into force in April 2018.

Financial Support for Energy Efficiency

Financial programmes used by LAs to promote energy efficiency.

Fuel Poverty

How LAs identify those in fuel poverty and any initiatives used to address this.

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

How LAs are using the recently introduced ECO ‘flexible eligibility’ programme to refer certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes, who are vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, to ECO obligated suppliers for support.

Smart Metering

How LAs promote awareness and uptake of smart metering.

The questions which LAs are asked to report on in the digital ‘Survey’ are listed below:

HECA Reporting 2019 Questions

Name of Local Authority: St. Helens Council
Type of Local Authority: Metropolitan Borough
Name and contact details of official submitting the report: Vicky Whittle Chris Birkett
Job title of official submitting the report: Assistant Manager Housing Strategy & Private Sector Initiatives Senior Affordable Warmth Project Officer
Names of teams working on policy areas covered by this reporting tool: St Helens Council – Housing Strategy & Private Sector Initiatives - Home Improvement Agency
Total number of staff working in above policy areas (by FTE): 3 Affordable Warmth Staff
Headline and Overview Questions

1	Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties?	(Y/N)
2	If yes, please provide a link to your current strategy here:	

Energy Efficiency for domestic properties included within the Council's Fuel Poverty Strategy.

<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency/sthelens-council-home-energy-conservation-act-heca-report/>

3	If no, are you planning to develop one?	(Y/N) N/A
4	a. What scheme(s) has your local authority implemented in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation (such as owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing) or non-domestic properties since 2017? (if you have not implemented any scheme, please enter 'N/A')	

Free text response to question 4a - please outline in no more than 200 words

St Helens Council's Affordable Warmth Unit (AWU) has implemented a number of schemes contributing to improvements in domestic energy efficiency. Officers qualified to City & Guilds Level 3 in Energy Awareness provide home visits and face to face advice. Visits identify if energy efficiency improvements are required, if any low cost measures are available to improve energy efficiency and also provide further advice on ways to improve energy efficiency and to reduce fuel bills.

Schemes enable residents to access:

- Energy Company Obligation (ECO)
- NEA's Health Improvement Programme
- National Grid Warm Homes Fund
- St Helens Council Housing financial assistance
- Housing emergency fund.

St Helens Council also commission Energy Projects Plus (EPP) to provide the Save Energy Advice Line (SEAL) a phone line to provide advice on energy efficiency, renewable energy technologies, and on the range of schemes available to residents whatever their personal circumstances.

St. Helens Winter Warmer Scheme – Over two winters the initiative has seen the delivery of a cold weather advice line; the distribution of 12,000 winter warmer packs to vulnerable homes promoting assistance available locally to help people through the winter months. The project is undertaken with

the assistance of many local partners, the main partner being Age UK Mid Mersey.

- b. What scheme(s) is your local authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation (such as owner-occupied, privately rented and social housing) or non-domestic properties in the next two years? (if you are not planning to implement any scheme, please enter 'N/A')

Free text response to question 4b - please outline in no more than 200 words

St. Helens Council will continue to provide the Affordable Warmth Outreach Services that will enable residents to access funding to deliver significant improvements in energy efficiency. The provision of face to face advice will provide a platform from which we can continue to provide initiatives.

We will also continue to encourage our local registered providers to implement energy efficiency measures in their properties.

As an example, the largest housing provider in the borough, Torus, have recently commissioned Scottish Southern Energy Solutions (SSE) to review poorly performing communal heating and hot water provision at key sheltered accommodation sites and are considering replacing existing systems with new renewable technology and other innovative technology.

They will be evaluating which smart building technologies such as cloud-based building management system (BMS), smart meters and wireless equipment would improve operations and also identify what long term investments in the heating system could reduce operational cost and enhance the internal environment for residents, e.g. redesign of existing heating distribution, high efficiency boilers, solid-state fuel cell, gas absorption heat pump, micro combined heat and power (CHP).

- 5 What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), including the value of grants and other support, plus any other costs incurred? Please provide figures and a brief narrative account if desired.

Free text response to question 5 - please outline in no more than 100 words

The revenue to administer the Affordable Warmth Services is approximately £203,500 annually. This includes:

- 3 FTE staff
- Outreach Visits
- Save Energy Advice Line
- Warm Homes Discount Campaign

- Collective Energy Switching Scheme
- Promotion
- St Helens Winter Warmer scheme, including:
 - Winter Warmer Launch Event
 - Distribution of 6000 winter warmer packs
 - Provision of a local cold weather advice line

The capital costs to deliver energy efficiency measures between April 2017 and March 2019 was approximately £529,500 of this £166,700 came from external sources.

In the next two years over £500,000 of funding will be available to deliver significant energy efficiency improvements.

6	What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?
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Free text response to question 6 - please outline in no more than 100 words

St.Helens Council maintains a strong emphasis on partnership work and the benefits this can have on improving energy efficiency and reducing the effects of Fuel Poverty. The Council continues to work with a broad range of local and national partners many of which attend the St Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group, partners include:

Age UK Mid Mersey

EPP

Foundations

Rhea Projects Ltd

Registered Providers

NEA

Citizens Advice St Helens

Association of Local Energy Officers

Merseyside HECA Forum

LCR/NW Fuel Poverty Group

Viridis / Local Enterprise Partnership

7	<p>What has been the outcome of the scheme(s) (e.g. energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness, societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.)?</p> <p>This does not have to be measured against national data or benchmarks, but rather focuses on the local authority's own monitoring and evaluation.</p>
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Free text response to question 7 - please outline in no more than 200 words

From April 2017 the outcomes of schemes in the borough include:

Affordable Warmth Outreach Visits – Approximately 1200 visits undertaken.

Heating scheme - 123 households have benefitted from heating measures. The NEA's evaluation reported:

- 89.4% increased thermal comfort
- 68.2% perceived cost of energy bills had improved
- 40% of households saw improvement in their physical and/or mental health
- 47.3% of households thought that their health condition or disability had improved since receiving their measures
- 54.4% said they thought the change in their health was related to their WHHF intervention.

Insulation Scheme - 44 households were assisted with 47 insulation measures.

Private Housing Initiatives Emergency Fund – provides assistance with small but essential measures - 184 households assisted.

Save Energy Advice Line – Received 3994 calls to assist with:

- Warm Home Discount campaign – 2460 households assisted to apply giving discounts on electricity bills of £344,400.
- Collective Energy Switching Scheme
- General advice

St Helens Winter Warmer Scheme – 12,000 winter warmer packs distributed

All schemes can provide improvements to health; reduce the impacts of fuel poverty and also reduce excess winter mortality/morbidity – In 2012/13 the Excess winter mortality index for the borough was 34.4% reducing to 4.3% in the winter of 2016/17.

8	<p>What lessons have you learned from delivering this scheme(s)?</p>
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Free text response to question 8 - please outline in no more than 100 words

Following completion of the NEA Scheme the Council continued to provide funding to install energy efficiency measures. Working with Public Health to further integrate the Affordable Warmth service with the local health sector to generate referrals.

A stipulation of the NEA Warm & Healthy Homes Fund was that ECO funding could not be used as match funding. This meant the scheme was not subject to fluctuations in the availability and levels of ECO funding. A consistent and reliable source of funding for energy efficiency improvements ensures that schemes are more successful, allowing for better value for money and increased outputs.

Local Communications Strategy

9	Does your local authority provide any advisory service to consumers (and businesses) on how to save energy?	(Y/N)
10	If yes to question 10, please briefly outline how this is undertaken (or enter 'N/A' if appropriate)	

Free text response to question 10 - please outline in no more than 100 words

St Helens Council commission Energy Projects Plus, a local environmental charity, to provide the Save Energy Advice Line (SEAL) a phone line which is staffed by experienced advisers who have qualifications in energy efficiency advice, renewable energy technologies, customer care standards and up-to-date knowledge of the range of schemes available to residents whatever their personal circumstances. The team is available to support domestic residents requesting assistance through various contact methods including telephone, email, web and social media. This is in addition to the Council AWU Outreach Service.

11	How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses? (if you do not, please enter 'N/A' and move on to the next section 'Local Green Supply Chains')
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Free text response to question 11 - please outline in no more than 100 words

Information is promoted using local media, Council's website, and promotion through our local partners via the St Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group.

St Helens Annual Winter Warmer scheme involves the promotion of services available to assist residents throughout the winter period. This includes the distribution of 6000 packs by a range of local partners to vulnerable households. The scheme is launched each year with an event supported by over 20 services and attended by approximately 400 residents.

Local Green Supply Chains

12	Does your Local Authority promote the use of energy efficient products amongst consumers (and businesses)? (if you answer no please move onto the next section 'Private Rented Sector')	(Y/N)
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13	If yes to question 12, please briefly detail how this promotion work is undertaken.	
<i>Free text response to question 12 - please outline in no more than 100 words</i>		
At face to face energy advice visits and included in documentation left with clients we encourage residents to consider energy efficiency ratings when purchasing new appliances.		
14	What engagement (formal or informal) does your local authority have with local businesses/supply chains involved in promoting energy efficiency products or carbon reduction?	
<i>Free text response to question 14 - please outline in no more than 100 words</i>		
Local Authorities in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) deliver Business Growth Hubs in partnership with the LCR LEP. Grant funding programmes that support business growth for all kinds of businesses are available to businesses in the low carbon economy. The Low Carbon Eco Innovatory led by University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores engages with businesses in the energy and environmental services supply chain and can support them to develop new products and services.		
All suppliers to the Council must sign a sustainability and environmental declaration to show a commitment to reducing their impact on the environment including energy efficiency and tackling the causes of climate change.		
Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards		
The Minimum Energy Efficiency Regulations (the Regulations) apply to all privately rented properties in England and Wales. As of April 2018, all such properties are legally required to have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of at least an E before they can be let on a new tenancy. This requirement will then extend to all such properties by 1 April 2020, even if there has been no change in tenant or tenancy (please see BEIS's published guidance documents for the full details on the standard).		
The PRS Regulations give enforcement powers to local authorities, and authorities are responsible for ensuring landlord compliance within their area.		
15	Is your authority aware of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards which came into force in April 2018? (if you answered no, please move on to the next section 'Financial Support for Energy Efficiency')	(Y/N)
16	Which team within your authority is responsible for, or will be responsible for, leading on	

	enforcement of the PRS minimum standard?	
<i>Free text response to question 16</i>		
St Helens Council's Private Housing Services will be responsible for the PRS minimum standards, this service includes the Enforcement Team and Affordable Warmth Outreach Service. The Affordable Warmth Team will be taking the lead on promotion of the standards to the private rented properties locally.		
17	Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team.	
<i>Free text response to question 17</i>		
Vicky Whittle – vickywhittle@sthelens.gov.uk Chris Birkett – chrisbirkett@sthelens.gov.uk		
18	What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?	
<i>Free text response to question 18 - please outline in no more than 100 words</i>		
St Helens Council has delivered forums for landlords in partnership with the NLA. Presentations are provided from a variety of partners on subjects that affect the PRS including energy efficiency and wider housing standards. Comprehensive information is also made available on the St Helens Council website, this provides information for landlords and their tenants. We also undertake joint working with St Helens Council's Revenues and benefits team and the local DWP via mail outs and events as required ensuring local landlords are kept up to date with current standards and broader issues affecting the PRS.		
19	Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties? If yes, how? If no, please explain.	(Y/N)
<i>Free text response to question 19 - please outline in no more than 100 words</i>		
We have recently undertaken an innovative piece of work with BRE to identify domestic private rented properties in the borough by cross referencing land registry data with Council Tax data. It is hoped that we can use this information with EPC data, once up to date bulk EPC data is made available, to undertake a targeted promotion ensuring landlords and their tenants are made aware of the PRS minimum standards.		
Financial Support for Energy Efficiency		

20	<p>What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic and non-domestic energy efficiency or energy saving? If applicable, please outline the sums, where such funding is sourced, and where it is targeted.</p> <p>(If you do not have any financial assistance programmes, please enter 'N/A' and move onto the next section 'Fuel Poverty')</p>
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Free text response to question 20 - please outline in no more than 200 words

Heating – St Helens Council provide a boiler replacement / central heating scheme to owner occupied low income households where there is a resident vulnerable to cold. Since April 2017 we have assisted 123 properties access a major heating measure at a total cost of approximately £435,000. Funding for these measures has been provided by:

- St Helens Council's Housing Capital funding - £296,000
- NEA's Warm & Healthy Homes Fund - £87,000
- ECHO scheme (a scheme funded through the Warm Homes Discount wider industry initiatives) - £48,000
- ECO - £3,700

Insulation – Since April 2017 we have directly assisted 44 properties with 47 insulation measures at a total cost of over £29,000, this includes an ECO subsidy of just over £4000.

St Helens Council – Private Housing Initiatives Emergency Fund – This fund provides assistance to owner occupied low income households where there is a resident vulnerable to cold. The scheme provides assistance with low cost measures including boiler servicing, heating repairs, upgrades to heating controls etc... From April 2017 – March 2019 we have assisted 184 properties costing approximately £65,500. Funding for these measures has been provided by:

- St Helens Council's Housing Capital funding - £41,500
- FILT Gas Safe Charity Funding - £24,000

Fuel Poverty

21	<p>Does your local authority have a fuel poverty strategy?</p> <p>If yes, please describe the scope of the strategy, and the support that is available for low income and vulnerable households to help tackle fuel poverty in your local area. Please also provide a link to your strategy if published.</p>	(Y/N)
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Free text response to question 21 - please outline in no more than 300 words

The Council's key strategic commitments to the reduction of fuel poverty and provision of affordable warmth are contained within the current Fuel Poverty Strategy. The Strategy's action plan is reviewed on an annual basis and aims:

- To provide information, education and advice on affordable warmth

- To work together to achieve affordable warmth
- To reduce fuel poverty by maximising income
- To improve health and well-being through affordable warmth
- To improve energy efficiency to achieve affordable warmth

The Council works with a number of partners to achieve these aims and progress is monitored by members of the Fuel Poverty Forum.

Affordable Warmth & Welfare Outreach – St. Helens Council's Public Health supports this work and forms part of a wider initiative to reduce the rates of Excess Winter Deaths in the borough. The main function of the Affordable Warmth & Welfare Outreach is to provide a home visiting service to help residents access affordable heating, insulation measures, and other low cost/no cost measures to make homes warmer, healthier, and more energy efficient, thereby reducing the levels of fuel poverty within the borough.

In addition to the physical improvements that can be made to a property residents are assisted to maximise their income by providing welfare advice to ensure clients access financial support they are entitled to and also to assist in reducing their fuel bills by accessing the Warm Homes Discount, by providing advice about switching supplier to get cheaper tariffs (via both direct price comparisons and through collective energy switching schemes), and assist those people who are in debt with their energy supplier through referrals to our local Citizens Advice service.

St Helens Fuel Strategy - <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency/sthelens-council-home-energy-conservation-act-heca-report/>

22	What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty? (enter 'N/A' if not appropriate)
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Free text response to question 22 - please outline in no more than 200 words

Due to data limitations and the relatively difficult way of assessing whether a household is fuel poor or not we target assistance to those households most at risk from cold related illness, those households on low incomes and vulnerable to cold.

Targeting of assistance since 2017 has focussed on areas with highest rates of excess winter deaths. We have worked with the Council's Public Health data analysts to identify areas and interrogated Council databases to generate address lists in areas with the most vulnerable residents. We have also worked with a number of local GP's to identify clients not known to the Authority.

These properties are then sent letters offering support. Where we have obtained an address list we follow up with a door knock, this significantly improves access/response rates to 38% compared to a response rate of approximately 5% where we are asking clients to respond to a letter sent by a GP on our behalf.

We continue to incorporate EPC data into the Council's UNO energy efficiency database as bulk data is made available and have also been working with BRE to update our Housing Stock Condition database this ensures updated information is available to effectively target interventions.

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| 23 | a. What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty? (enter 'N/A' if not appropriate) |
|----|---|

Free text response to question 23a - please outline in no more than 200 words

Energy Projects Plus (EPP) are commissioned to deliver the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Collective Energy Switch - Switch Together, Save Together. This includes local authority partners, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral, Liverpool, and Halton.

The LCR Collective Switch has proved to be an effective mechanism in engaging with vulnerable residents and generating household savings for residents. In St Helens, the Collective Switch scheme has now saved residents over £250,000 on their fuel bills. The average saving is over £243.00 per household; however some residents saved considerably more.

In addition to the collective switch we also undertake a Warm Home Discount campaign promoting the availability of the discount. We work with the Council's revenues and benefits team to identify those residents most likely to qualify for the broader group scheme. We then send out letters advising residents of how to apply, further assistance to apply for the discount is available via the Save Energy Advice Line. From April 2017 2460 households have been assisted to apply giving discounts on electricity bills of £344,400.

We also assist clients at affordable warmth visits to carry out energy tariff comparisons and refer those in fuel debt for support at Citizens Advice St Helens.

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|--|---|
| | b. If you have taken measures or initiatives to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty, what partnership with business or energy providers have you undertaken? (enter 'N/A' if not appropriate) |
|--|---|

Free text response to question 23b - please outline in no more than 200 words

See response to 23a.

The Energy Company Obligation

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Following the Spring 2018 consultation, the Government set out in its [response](#) that ECO3 will fully focus on Affordable Warmth – low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households.

The recently introduced ECO “[flexible eligibility](#)” (ECO Flex) programme allows LAs to make declarations determining that certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, are referred to ECO obligated suppliers for support under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO. LAs involved are required to issue a Statement of Intent that they are going to identify households as eligible, and the criteria they are going to use; and a declaration that the LA has been consulted on the installation of measures in a home.

24	Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (SoI) for ECO flexibility eligibility? If yes, please include a link to your SoI below.	(Y/N)
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Link to SoI: <https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency/sthelens-council-home-energy-conservation-act-heca-report/>

25	Please use the following space to provide any further information you feel might be of benefit to BEIS, in helping us to understand ECO Flex delivery in more detail. For example, the number of declarations signed versus the number of households helped.
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Free text response to question 25 - please outline in no more than 200 words

St Helens Council worked with the Liverpool City Region Authorities to produce a joint statement of intent (SOI). The advantages of the combined approach are that it offers economy of scale for funders; maintains a consistent message with the public and; uses the collaborative strengths and experiences of all the partners. We have recently been working with our sub regional partners to review and update the joint SOI.

Up to the end of March 2019 St Helens Council have issued 290 LA Flex Declarations. According to data from BEIS there has been 447 HHCRO measures installed between April 2017 and December 2018, of these 85 were through LA Flexible eligibility. To the end of December 2018 127 declarations were issued.

Smart Metering

26	<p>Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to:</p> <p>Engage and support your residents (including those in vulnerable circumstances or with pre-payment metering) to promote take up of smart meters and achieve associated benefits (e.g. ability to control energy use, identify best value tariffs)? Please detail any work undertaken or planned with local/community groups, housing associations, micro businesses, Smart Energy GB under their Partnership Programme and energy suppliers.</p>
<p><i>Free text response to question 26 – please outline in no more than 150 words.</i></p> <p>St. Helens Council will maximise all opportunities to support the roll out locally. We have recently assisted Age UK Mid Mersey with a Smart Energy GB Communities Fund application to support a programme of Smart Meter take up promotion throughout the borough. If successful this will link with our Winter Warmer campaign which targets 6000 vulnerable residents with advice and support to stay warm and well throughout the winter.</p>	
27	<p>Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to:</p> <p>Integrate your approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation with the opportunities presented by the installation of smart meters, drawing upon materials from the Smart Meter Energy Efficiency Materials Project or other sources of independent information.</p>
<p><i>Free text response to question 27– please outline in no more than 150 words.</i></p> <p>This potentially would have been possible if Energy Suppliers installing Smart Meters had to inform Local Authorities of where Smart meters were installed. This could have been followed with an advice visit from the Local Authority, dependent on capacity of services.</p>	
28	<p>Please detail any:</p> <p>Resources/ support (e.g. services, funding) available to residents who have had an appliance(s) condemned for safety reasons and cannot afford to replace it (e.g. during visual safety checks conducted during their smart meter installation or otherwise).</p>
<p><i>Free text response to question 28 – please outline in no more than 150 words.</i></p> <p>Support is available for those residents on a low income and vulnerable to cold via St Helens Council's Housing Emergency Fund and, when available to the Council, via Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT) Gas Safe Funding. The funding provides assistance with emergency interventions including heating and gas safety issues such as servicing, safety checks and repairs.</p> <p>From April 2017 – March 2019 we have assisted 184 properties costing approximately £65,500 of this funding approximately £24,000 was provided by FILT Gas Safe Charity Funding.</p>	

29	<p>Please detail any:</p> <p>Existing relationships with energy suppliers to help ensure that the opportunities presented by vacant properties under your control are effectively utilised (i.e. gaining access to install a smart meter).</p>
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Free text response to question 29 – please outline in no more than 150 words.

St Helens Council transferred all housing stock to Helena Housing around 2002, so have no control over any domestic properties. Since that time however St Helens Council have continued to work closely with Helena, which now forms part of the Torus Group.

Torus have trialled an energy provider to switch energy provision from out-going tenants to utilise Spark Energy as the new energy provider for the incoming tenant. This switchover is completed whilst the property is void and the incoming tenant benefits by having a fresh contract with an energy provider who is comparable with the Big 6, and this also provides an income for Torus. This income is then re-invested in energy and social projects across the group.

Future Schemes or Wider Initiatives

30	<p>Please outline any future schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation or businesses in your area, for example, within your Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Energy Strategy (if you do not plan any future schemes currently, please enter 'N/A').</p>
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Free text response to question 30 - please outline in no more than 500 words

The LEP Energy Strategy (currently in draft) highlights the importance of tackling housing as significant contributor to carbon emissions that must be addressed if local ambitions to decarbonise in the next two decades are to be realised. It recommends that retrofit of housing for energy should be prioritised as part of a wider drive for quality housing and recognises the recommendations of each home counts. The need to tackle the reduction of fossil fuel sources of heat in homes with both options of electrification and hydrogen having major infrastructure implications that must be addressed at the strategic level with coordinated action across agencies delivering infrastructure. ERDF funding has been awarded to social landlords in the Liverpool City Region to implement home energy retrofit, though this will make only a small contribution to the scale of the challenge.

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