Buckinghamshire Affordable Warmth Strategy 2017 – 2022

Affordable Warmth Network
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1.1. **INTRODUCTION**

Fuel poverty continues to be a major concern for local authorities, registered housing providers, and other support organisations. National Energy Action (NEA) estimates that just over 4 million households in the UK are living in fuel poverty and the latest figures from Government show that the number of fuel poor households in England in 2014 was 2.38 million, an increase of around 1.4% from 2013. This rise in fuel poverty has been summarised as being due to increasing fuel prices (outweighing the energy efficiency gains) and a generally lower rate of disposable income.

The Government defines a household as living in fuel poverty if “required fuel costs are above average and if they were to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line”. This updated definition was created as a result of the Hills Fuel Poverty review published in 2012 and shows a shift away from the previously implemented 10% definition in the hope of addressing fuel poverty as a distinct issue away from more generalised poverty. The Government now measures fuel poverty by using the ‘Low Income High Costs (LIHC)’ indicator, with a household being considered as 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.

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*Figure 1: Low Income High Cost (LIHC) Indicator. DECC, 2016*
Prior to this, the Government previously defined a household as fuel poor if they were spending ‘more than 10% of income on energy bills’. This definition is still used in parts of the UK such as Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, as a result of the updated definition in England, the number of fuel poor households nationally have been significantly reduced (as shown in the table below).

Table 1: Buckinghamshire fuel poverty levels in 2012 with the change of definition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No. of Fuel Poor Households</th>
<th>Proportion of fuel poor households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>38,802</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIHC</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>15,207</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The LIHC definition also describes a fuel poverty gap. This is the difference between a household’s modelled bill and what their bill would need to be for them to no longer be fuel poor. This approach therefore provides twin indicators of the ‘extent’ and ‘depth’ of fuel poverty. Example values for typical income and typical energy bills are given by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (now BEIS) in the diagram below:-

In this example, figures on the left hand side represent a typical English household with an annual income (after tax and housing costs) of around £19,700 and annual energy needs equating to around £1,242. The right hand side shows a fuel poor household, with a much lower annual income of around £9,300 (after tax and housing costs). Usually these households have above average energy needs (often due to a resident over the age of 60 or long-term health conditions) resulting in higher energy bills.

Alongside the financial and comfort implications of fuel poverty, there are many health risks associated with living in a cold and damp home which include heart attacks, strokes, respiratory illness, hypothermia and falls. Fuel poverty can also be associated with mental health issues, increasing the likelihood of depression, anxiety and social exclusion.
According to Age UK, the estimated cost of cold homes to the NHS is around £1.36 billion (Age UK, 2012), with around 24,300 excess winter deaths occurring in 2015/16. Health risks associated with fuel poverty can apply to all parts of society, however, there are certain demographics that are more susceptible to these risks due to spending longer periods of time at home and these are listed below:

- Older people
- Disabled residents
- Residents with long term conditions
- Unemployed residents
- Children under 5

These residents are often the hardest to reach with information. We should also appreciate that for many in this demographic, it can sometimes be a choice between adequately heating their home or buying other essential items such as food.

### 1.2. Possible Causes of Fuel Poverty

There are five main reasons people find themselves in fuel poverty:

1. **Low household income** – This could be caused by unemployment, inability to work due to ill health or caring responsibilities. Pensioners may also find themselves in this situation.
2. **Inefficient homes** – This could be because there is little or no insulation, leading to higher fuel bills.
3. **Inefficient heating systems** – Old boilers with limited controls and storage heaters can be expensive to run.
4. **Under-occupancy** – With only a small number of people living in a large house, it costs more, per person, to keep warm.
5. **High fuel costs** – Increasing fuel bills are still being experienced. Low income households often use prepayment meters to pay for their heating, which is still more expensive than paying by direct debit. Many residents are sometimes confused by the different tariffs on offer from energy companies. There is also a lack of confidence when it comes to switching supplier, which results in many not actively checking whether they are on the cheapest tariff. Also, properties that are located off the mains gas network are subject to more expensive fuels such as oil and LPG.

The majority of these scenarios can be resolved and potential solutions to some are highlighted below:

**Potential Solutions:**

- **Low household income** – This could be improved by carrying out a benefits assessment to check whether the householder is receiving all support they are entitled to.
- **Inefficient homes** – Raise awareness of energy efficiency and enhance through physical improvements such as increased insulation (encourage resident to explore potential ECO funding to assist with this/and or any potential Local Authority support).
- **Inefficient heating systems** – explore grant options available nationally or locally to upgrade to a more efficient system.
- **High fuel costs** – whilst we cannot control external pressure on fuel costs, it is hoped that the Smart Meter roll out will increase awareness of associated increases in fuel bills. The importance in ensuring the general public are educated in the importance of switching energy tariff or supplier can also help to keep costs to a minimum.

### 1.3. Excess Summer Deaths
Whilst in a temperate nation such as the UK, it is winter cold that tends to headline as the major cause of death and hospital admissions, excess summer heat can also be damaging to health leading to heat stroke, additional hospital admissions and occasionally death.

Affordable cooling is a term that will become more prevalent as extreme weather events/conditions normalise with the effects of climate change. For example in 2003, over 70,000 excess deaths occurred in the summer as a direct result of the heat and the actions taken or not taken across Europe. During this year, the hottest temperature ever recorded in the UK was experienced in Kent where temperatures reached 38.5°C. There are many health risks associated with extreme heat and these include:

- Dehydration
- Heat rash
- Heat cramp
- Exhaustion
- Heatstroke
- Increased incidents of skin cancer
- Hay fever irritation
- Overheating (can pose serious risk to those with underlying health conditions)

Residents should not only ensure that themselves and their properties will be warm enough during the winter period, but also that they are cool enough during particularly hot spells during the summer.

Well insulated and energy efficient homes will help to protect residents from excess heat and reduce the need for use of electrical cooling systems such as fans and air conditioning units.

1.4. AIM OF THE STRATEGY

The aim of this strategy is to enable residents within Buckinghamshire to achieve Affordable Warmth. Affordable Warmth can be accomplished through well insulated homes with efficient use of all fuel types. This is in part facilitated by access to grant assistance and income maximisation services. As a result, residents will benefit from warmer homes, lower fuel bills, improved health, greater comfort and better housing conditions. This strategy is not only aimed at those classed as living in fuel poverty, but aims to help anyone struggling to adequately heat their home. It requires a holistic approach, reflecting the complexity of the issue.

2. PROFILE OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
**POPULATION**

Buckinghamshire County is in the South East region of England. It is 600 square miles in size with a population of 505,300 (Census, 2011). Figures show a largely ageing population, with a 24% increase of people over the age of 60 accounting for just under a quarter of Buckinghamshire’s total population. However, 25% of the population is still made up of people aged 19 and under. 13.6% of the population are of a non-white ethnic background, made up mainly of Asian and Asian British populations (Bucks County Council, 2017).

**HOUSING**

The population are living in 200,727 houses (Bucks County Council, 2017) showing a 6.7% increase in housing from the 2009-2014 strategy. Almost a third of the population live in two main towns; High Wycombe and Aylesbury. The housing type in Buckinghamshire County is vast, with properties ranging from pre-1919 to new builds (Table 1). The age of a property is a major determinant in how energy efficient it is, with properties from the mid-1930s often having cavity walls which can be filled with insulation to reduce heat loss. Older properties tend to have solid walls, so insulation is more difficult. Generally, newer properties are more energy efficient.

Table 2: Age of Properties in Buckinghamshire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiltern</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bucks</td>
<td>DATA NOT COLLECTED</td>
<td></td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wycombe</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>35.4%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tenure can also affect the energy efficiency of a property (Table 2) and majority of housing in Buckinghamshire falls within the Private Sector. Most social housing is likely to have already had cost-effective insulation installed whereas within the private sector, it is the responsibility of the homeowner or landlord to improve the energy efficiency of the property. Often, there is high upfront cost associated with this which is one of the reasons why private sector housing is usually not as energy efficient at that of social tenure.

Table 3: Tenure of properties in Buckinghamshire, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Social Housing</th>
<th>Other public sector</th>
<th>Private sector</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buckinghamshire</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28,260</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>186,000</td>
<td>215,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10,770</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>65,150</td>
<td>76,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiltern</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,840</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>34,150</td>
<td>39,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bucks</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,550</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24,780</td>
<td>28,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wycombe</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9,100</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>61,920</td>
<td>71,520</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HEALTH**

The residents of Buckinghamshire are generally healthier than the national average, experiencing better self-reported health; a good proxy for mental and physical health. Life expectancy at birth for females in the area is 85 compared to 83 nationally and for males is 81 compared to 79 nationally (Public Health England, 2014).

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1. Data from the district councils
2. Data from Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), 2015
However, 13.4% of the population are reported to have a limiting long-term illness (Census, 2011) and as highlighted previously, these residents may be particularly susceptible to issues around living in a cold and damp home.

**Excess Winter Deaths**

Excess winter deaths are additional deaths that occur during the winter period due to cold weather. These are monitored using the excess winter mortality index, which calculates how many more deaths occur during the winter months compared to the summer months. This is calculated as winter deaths (deaths occurring between December and March) minus the average of non-winter deaths (April to July of the current year and August to November of the previous year) and is expressed as a percentage.

Figure 3 shows the excess winter mortality index between 2012 and 2015 for each local authority district in Buckinghamshire (Office for National Statistics, 2015). The graph shows that the index has ranged between 4% and 33% more winter deaths than non-winter deaths during this three year period, with the highest winter mortality seen in the winter of 2014/15. During this winter, the excess winter mortality index reported 33% more deaths in winter in Wycombe, 30% in Aylesbury Vale, 26% in South Buckinghamshire and 22% in Chiltern. Nationally, the year 2014/15 saw abnormally high winter deaths, with an estimated 43,900 excess winter deaths occurring in England (the highest number since 1999/00). This shows the importance of ensuring homes are well insulated and adequately heated, especially where there is a resident suffering with a long-term health condition residing within the property.

![Excess Winter Mortality Index](image)

Figure 2: Excess Winter Mortality Index for Buckinghamshire Districts between 2012 and 2015. ONS, 2015
When comparing 2014/15 figures for Buckinghamshire districts against the South East average, South Bucks (SBDC) is on par with the regional average and Chiltern (CDC) slightly below this. Both districts, however, still experienced over 20% excess winter mortalities during 2014/15. Aylesbury Vale (AVDC) and Wycombe (WDC) districts have both experienced more excess winter mortalities than the regional average, with Aylesbury Vale observing 30.4% excess winter mortalities and Wycombe experiencing the highest in the County of 33.2%. These points highlight the need for support around keeping warm and well during the winter in Buckinghamshire to ensure that excess winter mortalities do not increase further over the next reporting period.
MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION

The Index of Multiple Deprivation is the official measure of deprivation for small areas in England. The measure combines information from seven domains\(^3\) in order to produce an overall score for Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA)\(^4\) and then ranks these in terms of their multiple deprivation, with 1 being the most deprived and 32,844 being the least. In 2015, 12 LSOA’s in Buckinghamshire featured within the 30% most deprived areas in England (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015). These are highlighted in red in Figure 2 below and are clustered in Aylesbury and High Wycombe, with one in Chesham.

Employment

Buckinghamshire is a very affluent county compared to the national average, with unemployment only at 2.6% among those who are able to work (Office for National Statistics, 2016). The workforce is highly skilled, with 35% of Buckinghamshire population being educated to degree level or above. It also has above average representation of managers, senior officials and other professional occupations (Census, 2011).

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\(^3\) Income deprivation, Employment deprivation, Education, skills and training deprivation, Health deprivation and disability, Crime, Barriers to housing and services and Living environment deprivation

\(^4\) A LSOA is a geographic area used to improve reporting of small area statistics. It typically includes (on average) a population of around 1,500 but will also involve a minimum of 1,000.
3. Fuel Poverty in Buckinghamshire

Fuel Poverty data in this strategy has been obtained from recent annual statistics published by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), using the Low Income, High Cost definition. Figure 4 shows the most recent mapped fuel poverty data for Buckinghamshire, with red areas highlighting locations that are experiencing highest levels of fuel poverty. A map featuring individual legends for each district can be found in Appendix A, which illustrates higher levels of fuel poverty for each local authority area.

Figure 4: Percentage of Fuel Poor residents in Buckinghamshire 2015.

Between 2012 and 2014, there was a 0.3% increase of fuel poor households within the County, but this still remains below South East and national averages. It is likely that this slight increase is associated with
increasing energy prices and the ageing population within the county, resulting in the need to heat properties for longer. This highlights how there is still scope to increase the energy efficiency of properties within the County and raise awareness around the importance of keeping warm and well, especially to those residents who fall into vulnerable categories identified previously.

![Percentage of Fuel Poor households](image)

**Figure 5: Percentage of Fuel Poor households in Buckinghamshire, South East and England. (BEIS, 2016)**

4. **HARD TO TREAT PROPERTIES**

The age and build of a property that a resident lives in can greatly influence the level (and cost) of energy efficiency measures. A ‘hard to treat’ property is defined as a dwelling that is unable to accommodate cost effective energy efficiency improvements and includes homes with solid walls, limited or no loft space, homes without a mains gas connection and homes where for technical reasons, an energy efficiency measure cannot be fitted (BRE, 2008). It can be very expensive to install energy efficiency measures on these types of properties and this is often the reason that they remain inefficient therefore resulting in the resident living in a cold home.

Tackling ‘hard to treat’ properties will form a huge part of making homes warmer and more energy efficient in the UK. Displayed in Figure 6, is the percentage of solid walled properties in Buckinghamshire, with darker areas of the map showing areas with higher proportions of solid walled properties. Overall, solid walled properties feature across the County but are especially concentrated in Aylesbury Vale. However, it must be noted that some may be listed buildings or in conservation areas that are potentially difficult to insulate due to building regulations.

![Percentage of Fuel Poor households](image)

Over this period, the Affordable Warmth Network will continue to seek funding streams that can assist residents in installing expensive measures such as solid wall insulation which will substantially improve the efficiency of their property. The Network will also work to identify and target these hard to treat properties by working alongside energy providers and offering Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding that can provide financial assistance with the costs of measures such as solid wall insulation, loft and cavity wall insulation and replacement heating systems to residents who meet the pre-determined eligibility criteria.
5. INCOME MAXIMISATION AND FUEL POVERTY

Latest statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions show that in 2014/15, around £16.6 billion of benefits went unclaimed. It is becoming increasingly apparent that income maximisation should be playing a larger role in combatting fuel poverty and can include support around assessing whether residents are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to, supporting those who are currently in debt to their supplier and even checking if someone is on the best energy tariff. Alongside improving the efficiency of a property, residents should also be looking at ways they can save money and these simple steps could potentially increase a household’s income which could go towards heating the property efficiently and eventually being lifted out of fuel poverty. The main organisations that provide this service are listed in Table 4, and residents (especially those who are struggling to pay fuel bills) should be encouraged to contact these providers to find out if they are claiming all that they are entitled to.
Within this reporting period, the Affordable Warmth Network will continue to build upon relationships established with the Citizens Advice (CAB) through the now completed Better Housing, Better Health project. The network will continue to provide onward referrals to services such as CAB and Prevention Matters to ensure that residents are receiving the maximum amount of support available when contacting the helpline.

### 6. Community Engagement

The Government has highlighted that community-led action often leads to greater change and tackling local issues more effectively than a top down approach (DECC, 2014). Engaging the local community is a huge part of the Affordable Warmth Network in Buckinghamshire, this manifests through regular outreach events in local communities and training sessions available for local groups. Ensuring that as many local residents are aware of and understand the signs and implications of Fuel Poverty will play a pivotal role in achieving Affordable Warmth across the County. Over the coming period, the Affordable Warmth Network will continue to work and engage closely with local communities to promote the service and support on offer, along with raising awareness of the implications of living in a cold or damp home. Assistance will also include providing information and advice where relevant around Smart Meters and how they can be used within the home to monitor energy along with the advantages of this.

Engagement with these groups will be made either through existing relationships already created through the Network (such as connections with Prevention Matters and Age UK events) or through the creation of new relationships by further promoting the Network and its benefits.

![Promotional material used for Affordable Warmth Outreach](image)

**Figure 7 - Promotional material used for Affordable Warmth Outreach**

### 7. Partners involved with Affordable Warmth in Buckinghamshire
Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth are terms that are commonly used interchangeably but are issues that can impact any parts of society, therefore we are calling for a multifaceted approach, which includes many different stakeholders and organisations.

The Buckinghamshire Affordable Warmth Network allows the collaboration of organisations that work with vulnerable people across Buckinghamshire. The network specifically aims to assist residents at risk of fuel poverty, or impaired health as a result of living in a cold or damp home. It includes representatives from Buckinghamshire local authorities, health authority partners, local support services and the National Energy Foundation, who work together using a cross-referral mechanism in order to maximise the benefit to residents. Although the service targets vulnerable residents, there is no eligibility criteria for accessing it and it is hoped that this encourages residents to not only assess their own situations, but to look out for others who may benefit from support in making their homes warmer and healthier places to live.

Of course, resident behaviour also plays a huge part in ensuring homes are adequately heated, especially where there are vulnerable residents within the property. This is why advice, outreach and training feature heavily across the network, allowing experts to discuss ways in which residents can not only keep their homes warmer (and potentially healthier and safer) in winter but also how they can potentially save money on their fuel bills.

8. **PREVENTION MATTERS**

The Buckinghamshire Affordable Warmth Network works closely with Prevention Matters and is partly funded by Buckinghamshire County Council using a prevention grant. The Prevention Matters service provides advice that can support residents in regaining confidence, independence and ways to prevent loneliness. A referral mechanism has been set up so any residents who contact the Affordable Warmth helpline and may benefit from the support available will be referred across to Prevention Matters. Alternatively, residents can also obtain a referral from their local GP or health professional. It is hoped that this service will improve their quality of life of residents who contact the Network alongside raising awareness to health professionals of the help available to their patients.
### 9. Support Available

The table below shows the various local and national schemes available to residents in Buckinghamshire that may assist financially in improving the warmth of their home. To find out further information, residents should contact the Buckinghamshire Affordable Warmth Helpline on 0800 107 0044.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>National/Local</th>
<th>Purpose of the scheme</th>
<th>Qualifying criteria</th>
<th>Automatic/Applied for</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better Housing</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Advice for those struggling with heating their home</td>
<td>Available to all – contact 0800 107 0044</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Health Helpline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevention Matters</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Free advice service that links adults to social activities, volunteers and community services</td>
<td>Available to eligible adults (over the age of 18)</td>
<td>Referral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens Advice</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Financial advice for those struggling with fuel bills and benefits assessments</td>
<td>Available to all – visit your local centre or call 03444 111 444</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Home energy visits offering free small energy measures, switching and benefits advice.</td>
<td>Eligibility based on fuel poverty (some benefits used as proxies), Health conditions and households identified by local authorities under ‘flexible eligibility’</td>
<td>Apply via BHBH Helpline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Fuel Payment</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Money for the cost of keeping warm through the winter</td>
<td>Over 60’s</td>
<td>Automatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO – HHCRO (Affordable Warmth) grant</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>Able to fund energy efficiency measures that will help reduce a residents heating bills. The stream accounts for 75% of all activity funded through ECO.</td>
<td>Eligibility based on fuel poverty (some benefits used as proxies), EPC ratings in Social Housing and households identified by local authorities under ‘flexible eligibility’</td>
<td>Apply via BHBH Helpline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECO – Flexible Eligibility grant</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Able to fund energy efficiency measures that will help reduce a residents heating bills. The stream accounts for 25% of all activity funded through ECO.</td>
<td>Eligibility set be Local Authorities and published as ‘ECO Flex Statement of Intent’ on respective websites.</td>
<td>Apply via BHBH Helpline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Home Improvement Loan</td>
<td>Countywide</td>
<td>Low interest loan for home improvements. Minimum loan £1,000</td>
<td>Homeowners in Buckinghamshire aged over 60</td>
<td>Apply via Local Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Housing</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Grant of up to £2,500 for energy efficiency and warmth improvement measures.</td>
<td>Residents whose health can be negatively affected by living in a cold or damp home. (especially those who suffer with a cardiovascular or respiratory disease)</td>
<td>Apply via BHBH Helpline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Health Grant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary Local Authority Grants</td>
<td>Countywide</td>
<td>Financial support and grant funding for various improvement measures</td>
<td>Eligibility is varied depending on the resident need and is accessed on a case by case basis</td>
<td>Apply via BHBH Helpline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabled Facilities</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Up to £30,000 available</td>
<td>Residents with a permanent</td>
<td>Referral from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>for specific adaptations to the property to accommodate individual needs. Grant amount is allocated based upon household income</td>
<td>and substantial disability</td>
<td>Occupational Therapist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy Homes on Prescription Grant</td>
<td>Countywide               Grant up to £5,000 available to residents with disability or long-term conditions to provide small scale adaptations, repairs or improvements to properties</td>
<td>Residents with long-term condition or disability and at high risk of hospital admission or awaiting discharge</td>
<td>Referral from Health professional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

This strategy has been updated from the previous county-wide fuel poverty strategy (2009 – 2014) by the National Energy Foundation with partners from the Bucks Affordable Warmth Steering Group. Partners included in the development of the strategy are listed below:

- National Energy Foundation (NEF)
- Aylesbury Vale District Council
- Chiltern District Council
- South Bucks District Council
- Wycombe District Council
- Prevention Matters (Buckinghamshire County Council)

A consultation exercise was undertaken in July 2017 with stakeholders from across the county such as health and social care professionals, housing providers and voluntary support organisations. The strategy was updated to reflect feedback.

11. ACTION PLAN

The Affordable Warmth Network works together to help alleviate fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency across the county. They do this in a number of ways and will use the following action plan to track progress. The status of the action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis with suggestions accepted at any point during the year. There is some flexibility, as grants and government focus change and the Affordable Warmth Network will always try to make best use of funds available. The following action plan has been agreed for the next five year period.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Key Actions</th>
<th>Timescale</th>
<th>Organisations involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Low Income          | 1. Use benefit assessments to increase income                              | • Link up with benefit agencies  
• Promote benefit assessments at events                                  | • Short term  
• Ongoing                                                                           | • NEF  
• BCC Welfare Benefits Team  
• Age Concern  
• CAB                                                        |
|                     | 2. Increase awareness of available schemes                                 | • Promote Affordable Warmth Helpline  
• Promote flexible home improvement loans  
• Promote district council grants                                                   | • Ongoing  
• Ongoing  
• Ongoing                                                                           | • NEF  
• District councils  
• BCC  
• CCG / Public Health                                                               |
|                     | 3. Supplier switching/social tariff promotion                              | • Promote U Switch as an independent switching service  
• Organise switching events  
• Promote social tariffs  
• Promote Ebico – the non-profit energy company who charge the same to all their customers regardless of payment method  
• Advise on spreading the cost through direct debits | • Ongoing  
• Short term  
• Ongoing  
• Ongoing                                                                  | • NEF  
• Housing Associations  
• District councils  
• BCC  
• CAB                                                        |
| Energy Efficiency   | 1. Improve the energy efficiency of properties in owner occupied tenure   | • Promote availability of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) grants for heating and insulation improvements  
• Investigate an ECO referral mechanism through Affordable Warmth Helpline  
• Target eligible households in each district under the new ECO 2T ‘flexible eligibility’  
• Launch community focused projects  
• Promote flexible home improvement loans  
• Undertake mail out(s) to promote funding  
• Look into developing a carbon offset fund in Bucks to provide insulation measures at low cost  
• Work with NHS-CCG and NEF to link up GP referrals | • Ongoing  
• Ongoing  
• Short Term  
• Medium term  
• Ongoing  
• Medium term   | • NEF  
• District councils  
• BCC  
• Community groups  
• CCG                                                               |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Lead Bodies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2. Improve energy efficiency of properties in private rented tenure | • Continue to use landlord’s forums to disseminate information  
• Promote availability of ECO grants for insulation and heating improvements  
• Ensure properties are meeting minimum energy efficiency standards | • Ongoing  
• Ongoing  
• Ongoing |
| 3. Improve energy efficiency of properties in social tenure | • Establish relationship with Housing Associations  
• Train Housing Association staff  
• Host Switching Days for social housing tenants to help them find the best deal for their gas and electricity | • Ongoing  
• Short term  
• Short term |

For boilers and energy efficient technologies and thereby free up hospital beds.

Ongoing

NEF  
District councils
| 4. Promote Energy Saving Advice | • Raise awareness of the benefits of energy efficiency  
• Increase awareness of energy use through current cost monitors libraries | • Ongoing  
• Ongoing | • NEF  
• District councils  
• BCC  
• BCC Libraries |
|---|---|---|---|
| Expensive Fuels | 1. Encourage bulk buying oil | • Use Community Impact Bucks to promote bulk buying oil in off gas network communities | • Medium term | • NEF  
• Community Impact Bucks  
• Community groups |
|  | 2. Large scale renewable energy schemes | • Look into possible funding streams for renewable energy schemes including BSP innovation funding  
• Look into LEADER funding (to rejuvenate rural business) for potential wood pellet scheme in off gas network communities | • Long term  
• Long term | • BCC  
• NEF  
• Community Energy Groups |
| Hard to Treat properties | 1. Investigate possible solutions to solid walled properties | • Look at funding opportunities to deal with solid walled properties | • Long term | • NEF  
• District councils |
|  | 2. Explore ways to help mobile homes | • Look into possible funding for improving the energy efficiency of mobile homes | • Medium term | • NEF  
• District councils |
| Accessing hard to reach groups | 1. Work with the disabled and long-term sick | • Work with Clinical Commissioning Group / Public Health through GP surgeries, flu campaigns and events  
• Launch health focused projects  
• Try to seek additional funding for continuation of Better Housing, Better Health project (which ended in December 2016) | • Ongoing  
• Medium term  
• Ongoing | • NEF  
• CCG / Public Health  
• NHS  
• District councils |
|  | 2. Work with the unemployed | • Establish relationships with job centres  
• Launch community focused projects | • Short term  
• Medium term | • NEF  
• Job centres  
• Community groups |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Work with older people</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attend senior wellbeing days</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>NEF</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with Women’s Institutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium term</td>
<td>Bucks AgeWell group</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work with Bucks Age-Well group to link into older people activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>Women’s Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AgeUK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Target single parent families or families with very young children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NEF</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continue to work with children centres</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Children centres</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link with Bucks Family Information Services</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>BFIS team (BCC)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Launch community focused projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium term</td>
<td>Community groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Work with BME groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Medium term</td>
<td>NEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use minority community leaders to promote available schemes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community leaders</td>
</tr>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Work with BME groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NEF</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Identity key partners including voluntary and community groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>Voluntary groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Share information and data to target the right groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Community groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity any training needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Develop partnerships with other agencies who work with hard to reach groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td>NEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity key partners including voluntary and community groups</td>
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<td>Voluntary groups</td>
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<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Community groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity any training needs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Short term</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Confusion among residents</td>
<td>Promote the Affordable Warmth Helpline as referral service</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>NEF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Train trusted professionals such as health, social and advisory staff around fuel poverty and how to use referral network</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CCG / Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote helpline through partner’s websites</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>BCC</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote helpline through council newsletters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>District councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Continue to attend events to educate residents</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Advice agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable warmth advice stands at organised events</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>CAB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affordable warmth talks to community groups</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Job centres</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Affordable warmth talks to community groups</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3. Work closely as partners | • Confirm projects and schemes work together  
• Verify there is consistency of message  
• Identify and work collectively on bids for potential extensions to the network that mirror previous projects such as Better Housing, Better Health | • Ongoing  
• Ongoing  
• Ongoing | • NEF  
• District councils  
• BCC  
• CCG / Public Health |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Target through GIS mapping | • Continue to map areas with high levels of fuel poverty  
• Improve existing mapping of off gas households, solid walled properties and low income and use as indicators of fuel poor households  
• Use mapped data as a way of targeting households for support and assistance | • Ongoing  
• Ongoing | • NEF  
• District councils |
| 2. Use partner databases | • Continue to work with BCC InTouch team and Prevention Matters | • Ongoing | • NEF  
• BCC  
• Prevention Matters |
| Targeting appropriate areas/groups | | | |
| Smart meter roll out | 1. Raise awareness of smart meters | • Promote the installation and benefits of Smart meters  
• Use project run by Community Impact Bucks to help promote smart meters to off-gas residents  
• Encourage householder behaviour change  
• Make use of smart meter data to target energy efficiency campaigns | • Medium term  
• Ongoing  
• Ongoing | • NEF  
• BCC  
• Community Impact Bucks  
• CAB |
| 1. Affordable Cooling | • Promote benefits of insulated homes during periods of hot weather | • Ongoing | • NEF  
• BCC  
• District councils |
| 1. Raise awareness of benefits of insulation in keeping homes cool during hot weather | | | |

Bucks Affordable Warmth Partnership
12. REVIEWING AND MONITORING

This strategy needs to be reviewed and monitored to ensure aims and objectives are being met. Monitoring should be carried out by the Affordable Warmth Steering group, and should be reviewed at the quarterly meeting with a progress report produced annually.

All members of the Affordable Warmth Network have made a commitment to working to support this strategy and comments and suggestions will be continually reviewed by the Steering Group.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A – FUEL POVERTY IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE – MAP 2

Buckinghamshire - Fuel Poverty 2015
Low Income High Cost

Legend
Wycombe Fuel poverty
13% - 20%
10% - 13%
8% - 10%
6% - 8%
4% - 6%

South Bucks Fuel Poverty
8.5% - 9.30%
7% - 8%
6% - 7%
5% - 6%
3.40% - 5%

Legend
Aylesbury Vale Fuel Poverty
13% - 20%
10% - 13%
8% - 10%
6% - 8%
2% - 6%

Chiltern Fuel Poverty
10% - 13%
9% - 10%
7% - 9%
5% - 7%
4.70% - 5%