

Draft Fuel Poverty Strategy

For
Test Valley Borough Council



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Date: March 2013

Whilst the Environment Centre has endeavoured to ensure that all information contained within this document is correct, it cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies within or problems arising out of the use of this document.

This document is only intended to provide INDICATIVE information and guidance for those associated with this project.

Fuel poverty Background

- Fuel poverty is currently defined as the number of households which spend over 10% of their income on their energy bills.
- The causes of fuel poverty are widely recognized as being inadequate thermal insulation, inefficient and uneconomic heating systems, low household income and high fuel prices.
- It is estimated that between 2.6 million and 3.0 million UK households will be fuel poor in 2016 and that these households will comprise between 7.8 and 8.9 million individuals.
- Following an independent review conducted by Professor John Hills of the LSE last year the Government has launched a consultation into how fuel poverty is to be measured going forward.
- A new definition of fuel poverty could well include ‘dual indicators’ with one to measure the number of people affected (extent) and another to measure how badly they are affected (depth). However changes in the definition of Fuel Poverty are unlikely to affect general strategies set out in this document.

Practical action to alleviate fuel poverty in the Test Valley Borough Council Area:

We recommend a carefully targeted multi-agency partnership approach to address fuel poverty issues in the area.

Targeting

- Map areas with the highest incidence of fuel poverty in the Test Valley Borough area (using Hard to Treat Homes data from CSE)
- Assess needs of at-risk areas so that services can be tailored appropriately. It is recognized that the Borough has a wide range of housing types with varying needs; including a mix of rural, semi-rural and urban settlements, areas of especially old housing stock (where planning restrictions may apply), social and private sector housing. Make use of existing data sets (e.g. HECA) to achieve this.

Coordination of approach

- A central advice hub and free phone advice line with trained advisors who can refer or signpost residents to the appropriate service for their needs
- A partnership approach including representatives from all sectors which offer services to address the factors leading to fuel poverty:
 - Income maximization (DWP, CAB, charitable organisations)
 - Energy efficiency (the Environment Centre, Energy Saving Advice Service, Energy Companies, Green Deal accredited insulation/heating contractors)
 - Health professionals

- Facilitate meetings between RSL's and Green Deal Providers

Services to be offered

- Benefit entitlement check and application advocacy service (enabling access to all benefits to include heating benefits such as Warm Home Discount).
- Assistance with energy tariff switching, including promotion of collective switching projects, so that residents can obtain good deals.
- A clear and easy referral route to access funding under Green Deal/Eco for energy efficiency improvements.
- Provision of impartial energy advice – via telephone, email and face to face (at events and/or home visits)
- Provision of emergency heating for the most vulnerable residents, particularly during periods of cold weather.

Programme of activities

- Communications plan, to include:
 - Advertisements in local newspapers and news letters
 - Promotion through community groups, including attendance at meetings and events
 - Public roadshows
 - Distribution of information packs via front line organisations – (for example GP surgeries, social services, housing officers)
- Provide landlords with information on forthcoming legislation¹ and promote the Green Deal/Eco as a mechanism through which they can improve their properties.
- Offer a free home-visit service to the most vulnerable residents alongside targeted roadshow events and community workshops in key areas.
- Provide a series of training sessions for front line staff and volunteers to enable them to recognize the signs of fuel poverty and to signpost to appropriate sources of help.
- Carry out a program of workshops for young people and families, for example at secondary schools and colleges and at other young persons' clubs and drop-ins. The purpose of the workshops would be to highlight independent living skills relating to energy efficiency and fuel poverty.
- Community workshops promoting awareness of fuel poverty, the sources of help available and helping residents to develop practical skills.

¹ From 2016 a tenant will be able to demand measures recommended by their EPC to be carried out by their landlord.

By 2018 any property that fails to achieve at least an EPC rating of E will not be able to be rented out