



October 2007

GATHERING MOMENTUM ON AFFORDABLE WARMTH

Progress over the last 18 months and looking forward to future activity.

The last 18 months have seen great strides in progress and achievements in affordable warmth and fuel poverty in the Wakefield District. The Council's Home Energy Team have built on previous years work to develop a comprehensive and innovative programme of initiatives and schemes that lead the way and are seen as best practice.

The Team have embraced a strategic approach to fuel poverty; targeting schemes at the vulnerable, developing cross partnership working and applying for outside funding. All of this activity has seen real progress towards the Council's goal of eradicating fuel poverty and achieving affordable warmth for all Wakefield residents by 2016.

This report provides a brief overview of what has been achieved in the 18 months since April 2006 and what will be achieved over the coming 12 months.

FACTS AND FIGURES SINCE APRIL 2006

There has been a 6.44% improvement in home energy efficiency standards

£3.25 million in Government Warm Front grant money has been drawn in to the District

4,947 homes have received grants through the Warm Front grant scheme

£350k of Council funding has been used for energy schemes

560 households have received Council fuel poverty grants

£116k has been secured from the Community Energy Efficiency Fund for the Wakefield Warm Zone

£140k has been secured for fuel poverty grant schemes from the Energy Saving Trust

£420k has been secured from Neighbourhood Renewal for Local Area Agreement Fuel Poverty Stretch Target activity

1532 fuel poverty referrals generated through the Hotspots scheme from households in the Wakefield District

1,379 households have been given energy advice via Home Energy Team Hotline

38 dedicated energy awareness events and presentations have been given to local community groups

A FIRM FOUNDATION - KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE LAST 18 MONTHS

Affordable Warmth Strategy 2007-2010

Launched at Pontefract Racecourse in March 2007, the District's first Affordable Warmth Strategy sets out a multi-agency approach to tackling fuel poverty over the next three years. The Strategy aims to remove over 8000 households from fuel poverty. 12 local and national agencies have signed up to the Strategy, committing themselves to working together to achieve affordable warmth.

Local Area Agreement Fuel Poverty Stretch Target

When the target was agreed in July 2006, Wakefield Council were only the third local authority in the country and the first in the region to have a fuel poverty stretch target. The target is to double the number of private households claiming energy efficiency grants from 3000 to 6000 over three years (2006-2009).



A total of £420k has been secured, from Neighbourhood Renewal, to help deliver the target in partnership with Wakefield and District Housing. This has helped fund an extra Home Energy Officer post, connect Wakefield and District Housing properties to the gas network, provide free insulation for 163 vulnerable private households and purchase a new mobile energy advice unit (pictured with Home Energy Officer's Alison Webb and Trish Hirst). Progress so far is 2100 grants since April 2006.

Wakefield Council Energy Champion

The Home Energy Team successfully bid in the summer of 2007 to National Energy Action (NEA), the fuel poverty charity, to provide assistance to develop a Council Energy Champion initiative. Councillor Denise Jeffery will take on the role and assist the Home Energy Team to develop and deliver a programme of activity to raise the profile and awareness of fuel poverty and affordable warmth across the Council.

Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Progress

The Act requires all local authorities to measure improvement in household energy efficiency levels. The target is to achieve around a 30% improvement on 1995 energy use levels by 2010. Up to March 2007 homes in Wakefield had achieved 28% which exceeds the 2010 target of 27% identified as possible in 1995.

Hotspots Fuel Poverty Referral Scheme

Developed, piloted and launched in Wakefield in February 2006, the Hotspots scheme is a partnership between the Council, the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre, West Yorkshire Fire Service, Pension Service and the Primary Care Trust. Pictured is the launch of Hotspots at Wakefield Fire Station. The scheme allows each of these organisations to refer households quickly and easily for energy grants, fire safety and benefit checks. The scheme has been so successful in Wakefield that it has now been adopted across West Yorkshire and is being copied by other local authorities across the country. To date 1532 referrals have gone through Hotspots in Wakefield alone and 3268 across West Yorkshire. The Hotspots scheme won the regional NEA Affordable Warmth Sustainable World Award in March 2007, for its excellent partnership working to tackle fuel poverty. Mark Hooton, Home Energy Manager pictured second left collecting the award at the House of Lords from John Healey MP.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Home insulation and heating improvement schemes are essential to help households achieve affordable warmth. These include individual grants and discounts, or large area based home energy initiatives.

Health Action Wakefield (HACKW)

HACKW is the Council's most successful grant scheme. 100% funded by the Council it provides free cavity wall and loft insulation to households with an illness made worse by the cold i.e. asthma, arthritis or heart disease. Over the last 18 months 355 homes have had insulation installed through this grant. The Council has provided £170k towards this scheme.

Wakefield Energy Savers (WES)

Developed during the summer of 2006, WES provides free home insulation and heating to households on limited incomes. Funded by the Council with £90k, WES has assisted 177 homes in the last 18 months. WES also uses additional funding from npower which is used to provide extra cavity wall and loft insulation measures.



Hot Property Scheme

This is a coal to gas conversion scheme that provides 100% grants towards replacing coal central heating with gas. Hot Property was the first scheme of its kind to target ex mining households using data from the National Concessionary Fuel Office. Due to the innovative approach the Home Energy Team secured £90k additional funding to run the scheme from the Energy Saving Trust. In the last 18 months Hot Property has assisted 42 households.

Area based gas connection schemes

The Home Energy Team has developed three coal to gas connection schemes in partnership with Community Energy Solutions over the past 18 months. Current projects to connect properties to the gas are in New Sharlston, Smawthorne and Half Acres. During the summer of 2007 all residents in these areas were consulted on whether they wanted gas. The projects will also provide income maximisation help to participating households.

Warm Front Activity

There has been much activity to promote the Government fuel poverty grant Warm Front. Over the past 18 months over 20k households have been targeted with Council Tax Benefit and Pension Service database mail drops. This has resulted in almost 5000 households receiving grants and over £3m of Government funding being drawn in to the District.





Green Energy Promotions

The Home Energy Team have helped 20 homes in the District install solar water heating with the Solar Wakeup Grant. The £1000 grants, targeted at vulnerable households, reduced the cost to as low as £450.

The Home Energy Team has arranged two Green Energy Day events to raise awareness of renewable energy and sustainable living (June 2006 and 2007). The events held at the Waterton Countryside Centre attracted over 500 visitors keen to find out how they can install solar, wind and other renewable technology.

Pictured is Councillor Albert Manfield selecting the children's competition winners in 2006 and the Green Day Bus in 2007.



LOOKING AHEAD - KEY ACTIVITY OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

There are many key projects and challenges facing the Home Energy Team over the coming months. There will be the continuation and expansion of existing projects, but also the launch of new projects as the Home Energy Team gathers momentum with its affordable warmth and fuel poverty activity.

Wakefield Warm Zone

Over the next 12 months the Council's most important fuel poverty scheme will be piloted in three areas of the District. Funded through a successful bid to the Community Energy Efficiency Fund along with Council, WDH and Scottish Power money, the Warm Zone represents a step change towards a proactive fuel poverty strategy. In practice the Warm Zone will involve knocking on every door to provide face-to-face energy advice and grant assistance. The aim is to provide free cavity wall and loft insulation to every household in the Warm Zone area. The true benefit of the Warm Zone is the additional services it will provide from one survey. All households will also be offered income maximisation assistance, debt advice, fire safety advice and security advice.

It is estimated that the Warm Zone will assist around 4600 vulnerable households, drawing down around £6m of extra funding in to the District and between £1.9-£2.0m in unclaimed benefits will be accessed.

The Warm Zone will target around 11,000 properties in the three Neighbourhood Management Pilot Areas of Agbrigg and Belle Vue, Airedale and Ferry Fryston, Kinsley and Fitwilliam. A dedicated team of surveyors and a coordinator will be recruited to deliver the scheme. The Warm Zone will start with the first surveys in January 2008 with the aim of being completed by March 2009.

Wakefield Council Energy Champion

Over the coming months the Energy Champion activity programme will be implemented. This will include a presentation on fuel poverty to the Local Strategic Partnership, delivering a Members fuel poverty briefing session in January 2008 and a promotional photo shoot with Yvette Cooper MP as part of the National Warm Homes Campaign.

Affordable Warmth Strategy 2007-2010

Implementation of the strategy will move in to its second year. More activities that involve cross partnership working will be developed. For example discussions are underway with Groundwork to setup an education project with schools. The Home Energy Team will look to be more accessible with an energy advice tour of the District and the production of dedicated literature and grant application leaflets. The first year progress will also monitored using fuel poverty research produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy.

Energy Efficiency Improvement Schemes

The Home Energy Team will continue to run the following schemes over the next 12 months:

- Health Action Wakefield
- Wakefield Energy Savers
- Hot Property

Work will continue over the next 12 months on the area based gas connection schemes:

- By summer 2008 Smawthorn and Half Acres will have the gas infrastructure installed and by Autumn 2008 households in these areas will have new gas central systems.
- In New Shalrston the aim is to begin gas pipeline work to the village within the next 12 months.

Broadroyd Gas Connection Scheme

A new gas connection scheme will begin in November 2007 at Broadroyd, Ossett. This is a mixed tenure estate of 151 houses currently heated by a coal fired central heating system, which is in need of upgrade. The Home Energy Team working in partnership with WDH have secured £100k from the Northern Housing Consortium to install new energy efficient/renewable energy heating systems. The household consultation phase will begin in early 2008 with installations scheduled for completion by March 2009.

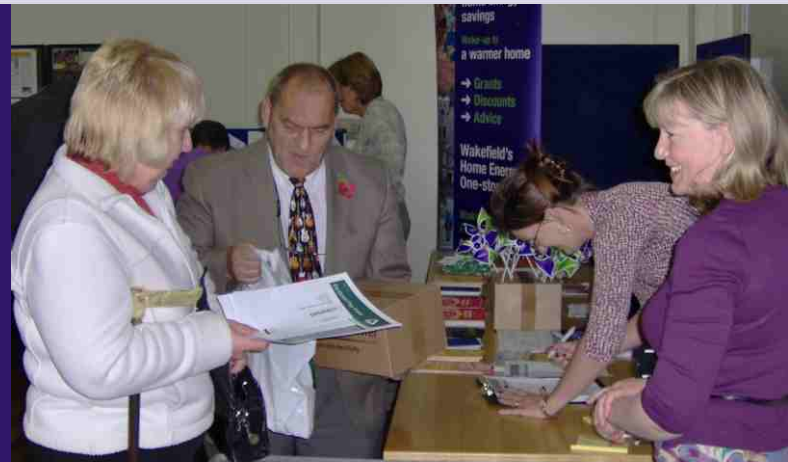
Code for Sustainable Homes (CFSH) & Developer Framework

Over the next 12 months the Home Energy Team will advise on the planning and development of the Districts new housing sites to ensure higher energy efficiency and environmental standards. This will include, working with developers so that new housing meets Level 3/4 of Code for Sustainable Homes (CFSH) and incorporates renewable energy technology. This will start by providing specifications on environmental standards in the Developer Framework in December 2007, as well as input into the Girhill, West End, Prince of Wales, Frickley Colliery and City Estate developments over the next 2 years.

Local Area Agreement Fuel Poverty Stretch Target

Work will intensify as we move in to the third year of the stretch target 2008-2009. This will involve arranging several mail drops for the Warm Front grant in 2008. The Home Energy Team will use a new vulnerable household database called Home Energy Officers Network (HEON) to send grant information to around 10k properties.

This is an overview of the key planned activity over the next 12 months and by no means represents a definitive list of all Home Energy Team activity. There will be more community based promotional activity such as the Healthy Homes Project held in Kinsley and Fitzwilliam in October 2007. Councillor Manfield is pictured handing out affordable warmth packs at the Healthy Homes Exhibition at Kinsley & Fitzwilliam Centre.



For further information on any of the activities in this report please contact the Home Energy Team on:

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