AFFORDABLE WARMTH CHARTER

It is our vision to ensure that everyone in the Wakefield district lives in a warm, healthy and energy efficient home.

JOIN US!
TO MAKE FUEL POVERTY HISTORY
Affordable warmth is a necessity for general health and wellbeing – it is the ability to heat a home to an adequate level for comfort and health without leading to debt.

A home that cannot achieve affordable warmth is fuel poor. Affordable warmth activities and interventions aim to help people heat and power their homes efficiently and effectively so they do not fall in to fuel poverty and suffer from poor health that comes from a cold and damp home environment.

In order to ensure affordable warmth activities and interventions are effective and have the maximum impact they should share five key principles, collectively referred to as the Five E’s.

**EVIDENCE:**
Affordable warmth activities and interventions should be based on the best available evidence and information. They should draw on high quality data and use this in their planning, monitoring, delivery and evaluation. This will ensure that they meet identified needs and priorities and can demonstrate that they are making a tangible difference to people’s lives. Accurate evidence is essential to highlight the importance and raise awareness of activity to alleviate fuel poverty.

**EVERYONE:**
Affordable warmth activities and interventions should aim to involve the broadest possible range of stakeholders, including people at risk of fuel poverty, energy suppliers, landlords, health and social care providers, voluntary and community sectors and public sector organisations. All of these stakeholders have a role to play to ensure affordable warmth activity impacts on the hardest to reach and covers all housing sectors.

**EVERYTHING:**
Stakeholders should consider the potential impact on fuel poverty from every activity they carry out and every service they deliver. Everything counts and even the smallest action or initiative can make a difference. This can be achieved by exploring how affordable warmth and fuel poverty actions can be built-in to and mainstreamed in to day-to-day work and if all stakeholders do this, collectively this can achieve a real positive impact. This approach can foster closer working and joint-commitment from stakeholders to deliver effective affordable warmth activity.

**EVERYDAY:**
Affordable warmth activities and interventions should be delivered on an ongoing basis if they are to make a difference and achieve a long lasting positive impact. There may be individual one-off projects and initiatives but they should be part of a rolling programme where stakeholders are collectively working together towards a common goal. In some instances this may mean mainstreaming and including affordable warmth activity and practices in to daily work.

**EASY:**
Affordable warmth activities and interventions should be attractive and easily accessible if they are to be effective and successful. They should endeavour to be activities that people and organisations are able and want to take part in. This can be achieved by minimising any barriers that prevent participation and by delivering activity that is mutually beneficial; helping to motivate real action.

Since 2007 there has been a strategy to improve affordable warmth and alleviate fuel poverty in the Wakefield district. This has helped deliver various activities and initiatives, involving a range of stakeholders, that has benefited many homes in the district by being warmer and more energy efficient. Much of this activity has improved the energy efficiency of homes, with better insulation and heating, but there has also been important work to maximise incomes, integrate frontline worker referrals and raise awareness of affordable warmth and fuel poverty. Despite this, affordable warmth is an ongoing battle considering the continual pressure on household incomes and increases in fuel prices. The latest research suggests that 10% of homes in the district are fuel poor and this is too many. So there is still much more we can do and this can only be achieved by stakeholders continuing to work together to target those in most need and deliver effective activity and initiatives.
THE WAKEFIELD AFFORDABLE WARMTH CHARTER HAS FIVE KEY OBJECTIVES

1. **Energy efficient homes**

A home that is not energy efficient is a home that wastes energy and has higher fuel costs. With rising fuel costs those that live in older, poorly insulated properties with inefficient heating systems can struggle to keep their homes warm and are at risk of falling in to fuel poverty. At particular risk are people on a low income, the elderly, the disabled and young families, who desperately need a warm and healthy home. Households that cannot afford to spend money on fuel can suffer from cold and damp related illnesses. There is a significant cost to the NHS of dealing with these cases yet for every £1 invested in energy efficiency there is a saving of 42p to the health services. Insulation and heating improvements are the most effective way to improve a home’s energy efficiency so that it can be affordably heated to a comfortable level.

2. **Awareness and education**

Simple and straightforward energy advice and education is an effective way to help households to gain the knowledge and skills to change their behaviour and manage the energy they use more effectively. Coupled with this, households often do not realise they are entitled to help with energy efficiency improvements or maximising their income. Raising awareness of the help available, particularly amongst the vulnerable and hard to reach groups, but also within organisations that deal with these people can make a big difference by putting more people in contact with the help available.

3. **Affordable energy**

Households that have never switched energy suppliers could be paying much more for their electricity and gas than they need to. If households are using prepayment meters they are also likely to be paying a higher rate as well as having limited options to switch suppliers to access cheaper deals. The Government suggests that households could on average save around £200 per year by switching suppliers. Experience also shows that there are many households in the district that do not access the benefits they are entitled to. All of these factors can impact on a household’s income and their ability to heat their home. Assistance and the tools to help households switch suppliers and maximise their income should be provided alongside other initiatives to help households achieve affordable warmth.

4. **Partnership working**

Tackling fuel poverty is a difficult objective because it can be hard to identify those in most need and provide the necessary measures when resources are under pressure. It is a problem that can only be tackled by organisations and individuals from a range of sectors all working together. This helps to maximise and make best use of the resources available, save on intervention costs and reach those most in need. For example, it is estimated that the cost to the NHS of treating cold related illnesses is around £2.5billion every year. Often, basic actions can make all the difference and one example is to simply refer people on to schemes that can provide energy efficiency improvements.

5. **Influencing the affordable warmth agenda**

National, regional and local policy needs to reflect our local issues reflect our local affordable warmth issues to best meet the needs of Wakefield District residents. Affordable warmth continues to be an important issue in Wakefield, demonstrated by this Charter and the previous two affordable warmth strategies, and it needs to remain a priority, which helps to ensure that there is adequate resource to continue this work. To maintain this profile the issue of affordable warmth and fuel poverty should continue to be promoted to local politicians and forums. To shape future work for the benefit of Wakefield residents, the Wakefield Affordable Warmth Partnership and its members should also contribute opinion to shape policy at all levels.
JOIN US!
TO MAKE FUEL POVERTY HISTORY

SIGNING UP TO THE CHARTER IS SIMPLE:

Fill out a Wakefield Affordable Warmth Charter Registration Form, setting out what you will do to promote the principles and objectives of the Charter. Forms are available from the Council’s Home Energy Team.

Join the Wakefield Affordable Warmth Partnership. Here you can attend regular meetings where you can share information, learning and best practice with other partnership members.

Demonstrate you have made a contribution to the promotion of affordable warmth and display your Wakefield Affordable Warmth Charter Mark with pride.

YOU CAN HELP HOMES IN THE DISTRICT ACHIEVE AFFORDABLE WARMTH BY:

Easy wins

- Making an official statement of your commitment to the objective of helping homes to achieve affordable warmth
- Working in partnership with other affordable warmth stakeholders as part of the Affordable Warmth Partnership
- Looking at what your organisation can do to help achieve affordable warmth
- Engage with your staff about their own experiences of affordable warmth and fuel poverty

Making a Difference

- Referring your service users for home energy advice and energy efficiency improvements
- If you are responsible for housing; by making energy efficiency improvements to the housing with the aim of removing all occupants from fuel poverty
- Encouraging your organisation’s staff to undertake home energy and fuel poverty awareness training
- Committing resources to help with the delivery of fuel poverty and home energy efficiency schemes
- Helping to promote and publicise local home energy efficiency and income maximisation schemes by distributing and cascading information

For more information about how you could get involved contact the Home Energy Team on 01924 305887, www.wakefield.gov.uk or EAT@wakefield.gov.uk