

# Delivering Affordable Warmth A Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent

Action Plan Report following Workshop with Partners

Wednesday 30 November 2016

9.15am – 12.45pm, Maidstone

Event organised by the Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP)



## Report

### Overview

KEEP is a partnership of Local Authority Officers whose remit is to reduce levels of fuel poverty in the County. The Partnership delivers either jointly or severally, energy efficiency projects across the county and includes climate change, health and energy.

KEEP Partners have developed a fuel poverty strategy for Kent, Delivering Affordable Warmth, A Fuel Poverty Strategy for Kent. The Strategy sets out the key priorities for Kent driven by national policy and also by local strategies and identification of need.

An action plan sits under the strategy – this has been drafted by KEEP partners, however fuel poverty is a problem that can be best tackled by a multi-agency approach and partnership working.

### Aims and Objectives

To bring together, public, voluntary and community sector organisations to develop the action plan further, a workshop was arranged to get a better understanding of the activities already happening in Kent, and how we can enhance/ contribute/ link up to ensure we reach and assist vulnerable residents and tackle the wider inequalities of health and deliver a healthier county.

The event was held at The Gallagher Stadium in Maidstone. 34 people attended from various partner organisations across Kent including; Local and County Councils, Housing Associations, NHS England, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Citizen Advice, Southern Water, Energy Consultant Company and Community Energy Groups.

The Workshop was facilitated by Chris Church from Talk Action, and Dr Caroline Jessel presented the impacts on health of living in a cold environment and highlighted the need for change in the NHS to ensure sustainability and close the health and wellbeing gap.

### How feedback was captured

All participants were provided with the agenda and workshop sheets before the event. During the event, large worksheets were placed on each table to capture feedback/comments to all questions. Presentations from Chris Church and Dr Caroline Jessel were circulated after the event, along with this report.

### Funding

The workshop was part funded through KEEP and we would like to say thank you to KCC and NEA Warm Homes Award for their funding contributions.

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### Round table facilitated workshop – key themes arising:

- There is a need for joint approaches.
- While many organisations in Kent are working on a range of activities related to energy, fuel poverty, health and climate change, many are not working in partnership.
- There is a need to ensure all relevant organisations are working together in partnership to address fuel poverty
- Projects/schemes may work better when co-ordinated by the local/county councils.
- Hospital admission is a key priority area to reduce burden on the NHS.

### Good reasons for partnership working?

- Fuel poverty is a big issue for Kent.
- To create a large referral network and a Hub where professional practice can be recorded and worked upon.
- To facilitate/share training – for example health professionals to identify people in fuel poverty, including, health workers etc.

### Feedback from the Workshop

Time was allotted for each group to discuss each of the 4 Priorities detailed in the Fuel Poverty Strategy, followed by a feedback session from tables. Some of the notes from discussions are detailed below:-

### PRIORITY 1: Information Gathering and Sharing

#### Key issues arising/Common themes

- Gap in knowledge about health and wellbeing boards.
- Partnerships are key. Who takes the lead in making people aware and sharing?
- Communication between organisations
- Need to be able to share data in order to assist vulnerable residents
- Central referral point

#### Some examples of fuel poverty data held by organisations

Kent Fire Rescue Service – NHS data has helped develop criteria for home safety visits enabling precise mapping of vulnerability down to postcode/ street level.
Moat Foundation –household data profile using data collected at tenancy visits and stock condition report.
KCC – EPC data .
Southern Water - affordable tariff targeting – 7% are not metered customers.

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### Some examples of health data held by organisations

Family mosaic – health and wellbeing audits undertaken.

Moat Foundation – Open Exeter data (gives Health Authorities the power to grant access to secure patient data to authorised NHS users)?

Hospital Discharge teams – in West Kent a Health & Housing Co-ordinator (HIA) based at Pembury Hospital helps facilitate safe and timely hospital discharge - ensuring patients are not returning to a cold home, making referrals to maximise benefits where appropriate.

### New schemes/funding that link fuel poverty/ vulnerable households

Southern Water – affordable tariff metering.

Moat Foundation staff can undertake work shadowing to assist learning about signposting.

KFRS – Home Safety Visits – approx. 30k a year – falls prevention, housing interior and smoke detectors Multi agency referral form.

Local Authorities – Better care fund, Disabled Facility Grants, repayable housing assistance, winter warmth funding.

### How can we develop/maintain local initiatives and share information with partners

Local Authorities – Agency awareness days - invite to housing department to share what housing team does - mainly voluntary section.

Moat housing – sheltered housing scheme supported living?

## PRIORITY 2 – Improving Energy Efficiency

### Key issues arising

- Websites – share links to other services ‘information overload’
- Need for co-ordinating group to co-ordinate/ promote Kent wide activity – could this be KEEP (Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership?)
- Flu mail out/ jab and share information – ‘county wide mailouts, newspapers’
- Multi agency referral – central webpage – who would control this/ keep updated.
- Collaboration – not competition between agencies/ groups
- need to make every contact count
- better technology/information sharing/awareness days from each organisation to share information and ways of working
- Use of different types of media, i.e. You Tube to disseminate information i.e. energy efficiency/ dealing with damp/ mould/ condensation
- Not just about reaching people in their homes – should widen this to workplace

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### Examples of existing initiatives

West Kent Housing – move in tenant advice.

Big Energy Saving Network –Provide British Gas monitors and give advice.

Citizens Advice – Advice (especially debt, utilities and health) and refer to any scheme available. Big Energy saving week – fuel switching advice (go into GP surgeries).

Councils (Energy Efficiency Officers) – Statutory duty to reduce fuel poverty (HECA/ WHECA)  
- Heating/ insulation, grants/ loans, resident newsletters.

East Kent Housing – free insulation, gas safety checks, magazine sent to tenants.

Care Navigators – working with hospital discharge teams to pick up on cold homes.

### Communication – existing/opportunity

East Kent Housing – provide tenants with condensation leaflets.

Southern Water - information sharing on website.

Opportunity to link to GP surgeries and 'drop in's to provide energy efficiency advice.

Medway Council – staff specifically deal with overall conditions of residents.

Red Zebra community solutions - helps all agencies in one place - central hub to link agencies currently just in Canterbury.

### What funding is available to help support people living in cold homes other than ECO?

HIA cycle refurbishment programmes (revenue budget.

Co-operatives (Eastbourne) revolving fund?

Fast payback trials (lend money up front and payback on savings eg LED) - revolving to pay-back and build up the funds.

Councils have some funding available -some local authorities have winter warmth funding, and may look at amending housing assistance policy to enable a wider group of vulnerable people to achieve more affordable warmth through the more expensive insulation measures.

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### How can we make links between organisations to help vulnerable households?

Hubs of teams talking to people in the same location - socially linked.

CABs - staff specifically to deal with the overall living conditions of residents. Require partnership working between statutory agencies and voluntary sector.

Health trainers – to signpost/ link with key people. Behaviour lifestyle and social barriers linking to fuel poverty.

### Priority 3 Reducing Fuel Costs

#### Key issues arising

- Knowledge hub – into which everyone can contribute – issue would be who will oversee it
- Building referral mechanism; actively enabling contacts between organisations
- Pre-tenancy advice/ pre-retirement advice/ schools

#### What can be done to reduce fuel costs

Promoting connection to gas mains in rural areas

Easy to use controls to heating systems

Moat community development work is trying to change behaviour on how to heat homes (heat the area or room that is in use rather than whole house)

CAB – discussing smart meters with people ‘layman’s guide on usage costs and comparisons – signposting’ – ‘legislation – price reductions passed to consumer by law’

Switching energy supplier

Change from key meters ‘ people don’t understand how to use their heating’

New project idea: energy local: a street all gets renewable energy to generate their own energy supplies - they then share their energy with each other when not at home/not using.

Tax bands/lose benefits if work and certain amount of hours a week - counter productive

Community oil schemes

Downsizing - incentive - save fuel costs

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### What schemes are in place or planned?

KMSEP Warm Homes offers – subsidised insulation offers for vulnerable residents
Smart meter roll out
Community oil schemes

### How can we make links between organisations to help vulnerable residents?

Funnel information to one body to forward to relevant organisations
Networking/technology/information sharing/memorandum of understanding to cover confidentiality
The KFRS conduct at least 10,000 home visits a year but not currently offering fuel cost advice
NHS - <i>Opportunity to include energy efficiency advice in recruitment of staff (especially lower paid employees)</i>

### Priority 4 Increasing Household Income

#### Key issues arising:

- Making people aware what's out there and what they are entitled to.
- Focus on people in low income employment/ zero hour contracts
- Not just maximisation of income but also better money management skills

#### How can we increase household income?

Refer people to Barclays who try to help residents save money on their bills through back to work schemes and IT training
Income maximisation for residents:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change from key meters</li> <li>• Debt advice and education</li> <li>• Checking all relevant benefits are claimed</li> <li>• Winter fuel allowance/ warm home discount</li> <li>• Minimise debts</li> <li>• Not just maximisation of income, but necessary to budget income (life skills – basic advice and priorities)</li> <li>• Greater awareness of charity funds available</li> </ul>
Help residents back to work
Lifestyle changes - make every contact council - behaviour change
Education at school/college level - more knowledge of charity funds available

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### What schemes are in place or planned?

Family mosaic for disabled facilities grant
HSC and CAB - benefits, budget, prioritisation advice, tax credits. To look at budgeted income maximisation not just increasing'
CAB – advice surgery and benefits

### How can we make links between organisations to help vulnerable residents?

Work with Job Seekers (job centre plus)
Linking different areas/experts in organisations eg linking energy officers and economic development in KCC local activities is needed
Social prescribing could be expanded
Care Navigators could play a key role, however need more to be employed
Link up with food banks

### Some thoughts from the day:

We have got to make this partnership working work and use everybody's strengths and resource the best that we can. The other challenge is around health. We've got to get health buy in and keep it on the agenda. There are glimmers of hope beginning, for example reference to fuel poverty is made in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Policy (Kent document) which could make things really powerful.

Getting health buy in and making things work is one of the best summaries of the challenges and opportunities facing fuel poverty. Many organisations/stakeholders need to develop new ways of thinking, for example; who do we see, who do we talk to every week, who else can we talk to? How can start a dialogue?

We often say – oh I didn't know you did that. Maybe what is needed is just a very rudimentary list/diagram that elaborates on not only what people are involved but also what support they currently offer. Contact details for the first point of contact – maybe a start for this would be to use the names of the attendees from today's workshop? Perhaps establish a wider directory of stakeholder contact that is regularly updated.

At one end we have legislation at the other end we have extremely practical stuff about accessible people, about key safes, about signposting to the right people and making sure that people receive a visit/advice about fuel poverty and the help that is available.

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### Next steps

The workshop has brought out an enormous amount of ideas, that provoked some ideas that attendees can take away with them and think about how these can be taken forward..

We hope this very positive workshop will encourage (is the starting point for) continued support for the Strategy and Action Plan from public health agencies, local authorities and other groups

KEEP members will digest all of today's outcomes and use the information to inform/ strengthen the Action Plan and progress action on Fuel Poverty across Kent.

### Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Chris Church and Dr Caroline Jessel for attending and supporting the work around fuel poverty. We would also like to thank the staff at the Gallagher Stadium and all those partner organisations who participated in the workshop.

Developed by the  
**Kent Energy Efficiency Partnership (KEEP)**

For and on behalf of Kent Private Sector Housing Group and Kent and Medway Sustainable Energy Partnership.

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