
Joint Meeting of Cabinet Member (Sustainability and Local Infrastructure) and
Cabinet Member (Neighbourhood Action, Housing, Leisure and Culture) 6 September 2012
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee 12 September 2012

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member (Sustainability and Local Infrastructure) – Councillor A. Khan
Cabinet Member (Neighbourhood Action, Housing, Leisure and Culture) – Councillor Ruane

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of City Services & Development

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Tackling Fuel Poverty in Coventry

Is this a key decision?

No. Although the matter within the report can affect all wards in the City, it is not anticipated that the impact will be significant and it is therefore not deemed to be a key decision.

Executive Summary:

This report reviews the nature and extent of fuel poverty in Coventry, and describes some of the key initiatives that are being implemented to tackle the problem. It also looks at the changing national policy framework and the future opportunities that this presents. The report will be followed by ones later in the financial year to make detailed recommendations for the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and to propose a report to be submitted in response to the requirements of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member (Sustainability and Local Infrastructure) and Cabinet Member (Neighbourhood Action, Housing, Leisure and Culture) are recommended to:

1. Acknowledge the progress made so far in addressing fuel poverty in the city.
2. Agree to officers undertaking further work to appraise potential options for the effective delivery of Green Deal and ECO.
3. Agree to receive two subsequent reports; one to present more detailed recommendations in relation to the Green Deal & ECO and the second a Home Energy Conservation Act report for approval for submission to the Secretary of State.

The Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee is recommended to support the recommendations to the Cabinet Members and to identify any further scrutiny work.

List of Appendices included:

Appendix A – Map of fuel poverty distribution across Coventry.

Appendix B – Overview of findings from 'The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty', published by the Marmot Review Team.

Appendix C – Proposed Coventry and Warwickshire LEP Strategic Aspirations for the Green Deal and ECO

Other useful background papers:

Local Authorities and the Green Deal – Department of Energy and Climate Change November 2011

<http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/11/tackling-climate-change/green-deal/3491-local-authorities-and-the-green-deal-information-.pdf>

Guidance to English Energy Conservation Authorities Issued Pursuant To The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 – Department Of Energy And Climate Change July 2012

<http://www.decc.gov.uk/assets/decc/11/tackling-climate-change/saving-energy-co2/5992-guidance-to-english-energy-conservation-authoritie.pdf>

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes. Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee (12 September 2012)

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report Title: Tackling Fuel Poverty in Coventry

1. Context (or background)

Background

- 1.1 In 2012, the City Council approved a Climate Change Strategy for Coventry. During the approval process the connections between carbon reduction, energy efficiency, fuel poverty and the adverse effects of cold homes were highlighted. The Strategy sets out a vision for Coventry which includes improving home energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty.
- 1.2 Members asked for a report on fuel poverty and it was agreed that this would be done in two stages. This first report provides an update on the problem of fuel poverty and what is being done to tackle it. It also provides an overview of the changing national policy framework and the opportunities that this presents. Subsequent reports will follow with detailed recommendations for the Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and a draft Home Energy Conservation Act report.

The nature and extent of fuel poverty and its impacts

- 1.3 A household is defined as being in fuel poverty when more than 10% of income has to be spent to achieve an adequate level of warmth. The causes of fuel poverty are inadequate thermal insulation, inefficient and uneconomic heating systems, low household income and high fuel prices.
- 1.4 Levels of fuel poverty in Coventry are a cause for concern. The latest figures available from the Department of Energy and Climate Change show that in 2010, 21.1% of households in Coventry were in fuel poverty, compared with 19% in England. The situation is much worse in some of the City's more deprived neighbourhoods. Neighbourhood-level Government statistics are often presented by geographical areas known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs), with each LSOA typically comprising of 5-600 homes. Of the 197 LSOAs for Coventry, 68 have fuel poverty levels of 25% or more, and 8 have levels of 30% or more. The worst level of fuel poverty for an LSOA in Coventry is 36.8% (see Appendix A).
- 1.5 The correlation between fuel poverty and deprived neighbourhoods can be clearly seen. The problems are particularly acute where low-income households are living in older poorly-insulated houses. The effects can be far reaching, impacting on health and wellbeing, limiting educational attainment and exacerbating child poverty.
- 1.6 In 2011 the Marmot report was published, examining the health impacts of cold homes and fuel poverty. The report concluded that cold homes and fuel poverty impacted directly and indirectly, with various physical and mental health consequences for children, adolescents, adults and older people. Appendix B provides an overview of the reports findings. Analysis undertaken by the Building Research Establishment estimated that the annual cost to the NHS of poor health arising from cold homes was £145m.
- 1.7 Owner occupied and privately rented homes make up 81% of the city's housing stock. This year a private sector stock condition survey was commissioned to include research into home energy efficiency and fuel poverty. The results are not yet available, but key findings will be reported verbally to the Cabinet Members at their meeting.

Initiatives to tackle fuel poverty in Coventry

- 1.8 The Council is playing a leading role in the development and implementation of projects to improve home insulation and heating efficiency, providing financial help to reduce fuel costs and supporting householders with fuel debt arrears. Current and recent projects are summarised below:
- 1.9 **Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) Schemes.** Under CESP the major energy companies have legal obligations to fund energy efficiency improvements to achieve targets set by the Government. Schemes can only be carried out in deprived neighbourhood-level LSOAs designated by the Government, of which there are 31 in Coventry. Decisions about which LSOAs, and which houses within the LSOAs, are to benefit from energy efficiency improvements are made by the energy companies based on a cost/benefit assessment considering carbon savings and cost of measures.
- 1.10 There are currently CESP schemes on-site or starting imminently in 16 of the 31 LSOAs. They have been selected on the basis of contracts between the energy companies and housing associations (HAs) to improve social rented properties. 2700 HA properties in these areas are scheduled to have energy efficiency improvements by the end of 2012, at which point CESP will be superseded by the Green Deal and ECO.
- 1.11 Officers have sought, where possible, to influence the energy companies to extend the work in CESP areas to cover owner-occupied and privately rented properties and schemes have been extended in 10 of the 16 LSOAs. The cost to owners varies across the areas.
- 1.12 There are CESP schemes in Foleshill and Hillfields where officers have been successful in getting private owners included. E.ON agreed to make an offer to private owners in these LSOAs that includes free loft and cavity wall insulation and free external wall insulation. Old and inefficient gas boilers are also being replaced for free if external wall insulation is being installed at the same time and are being replaced at a substantially reduced cost if not.
- 1.13 **City-wide Free Home Insulation Scheme.** This scheme was launched in October 2011 in conjunction with Rockwarm, a company based in Nuneaton, to provide free loft and cavity wall insulation. The funding comes from EDF Energy, under an obligation under the Carbon Emission Reduction Target (CERT). To date, over 800 installations had been carried out. The scheme is likely to continue until the end of 2012, when CERT will also be superseded by the Green Deal and ECO.
- 1.14 **Data Matching to Promote Take-up of Warm Home Discount, Free Home Insulation and Free Home Energy Assessments.** Developed and implemented in partnership with E.ON, this project aims to assist vulnerable low income households who are in receipt of benefits. It enables eligible households to receive a discount of £130 off their next winter fuel bill under the Warm Home Discount (WHD), free loft and cavity wall insulation together with a £100 payment after installation and a free home energy assessment.
- 1.15 The project was influenced by the success of an earlier initiative in 2010 when officers matched data from the City Council's aerial thermal imaging survey with benefits data. This resulted in the Council sending letters to the occupiers of homes that were losing excessive amounts of heat who were also in receipt of benefits and therefore likely to be in fuel poverty. The initiative led to over 600 homes getting help with heating and insulation improvements.

- 1.16 Under the latest data matching project, E.ON agreed to make their Coventry customer database available to the Council so that it could be matched with selected data from the Housing Benefits Team. This was done within the parameters of a formal Information Sharing Agreement and led to over 4000 E.ON customers being identified who were in receipt of the required benefits that would give them eligibility for the WHD and free insulation offer.
- 1.17 Letters, funded by E.ON, were sent by the Council. The fuel bill discount is being paid for by E.ON under their WHD obligation and the free insulation offer under their CERT obligation. At no time was City Council information shared with E.ON.
- 1.18 By the end of July, 225 households (5.5%) had responded to the letter. A comparable data matching project undertaken nationally by the Government and targeting the same type of benefits recipients achieved a 3% response. A follow-up campaign to raise awareness of the offer has also been run by Neighbourhood Action in the Council's priority Neighbourhoods. By 23 August, 406 households (10%) had responded.
- 1.19 **Keeping Coventry Warm Project.** In December 2011 the Council successfully bid to the Department of Health for £104,000 to help alleviate fuel poverty for low income vulnerable households. A broad range of partner organisations contributed to the Keeping Coventry Warm Project, including Act on Energy, Age UK Coventry, Coventry Law Centre, Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau, Groundwork West Midlands and Rockwarm.
- 1.20 The project raised awareness within the health community of the benefits to health of work to alleviate fuel poverty. Further engagement is planned over the coming year with health practitioners sharing information and developing referral pathways, particularly for patients with long term conditions. The project also contributed to DoH research which is expected to include guidance around health and fuel poverty in future versions of their Cold Weather Plan.
- 1.21 Project outputs between January and March 2012 included:
- Over 200 home energy assessments carried out.
 - 30 G.P. practices actively using Keeping Coventry Warm prescription pads for patients to obtain fuel debt advice, free home insulation and emergency support as required.
 - Over 75 front-line staff from the public, private and voluntary sectors have been trained to recognise fuel poverty issues and to refer residents for assistance.
 - Additional support from Age UK to assist older people with food, heating and clothing.
 - 70 fuel debt advice appointments made via a dedicated Fuel Debt Advice Line.
 - 25,000 thermocards distributed across Coventry to enable vulnerable groups to monitor the temperature of their homes and to use the details provided on it to contact support agencies.
- 1.22 **The Warm Front Scheme.** This is a Government scheme managed nationally by Carillion Energy Services that provides grant assistance for insulation and heating improvements. Assistance is available to owner-occupiers and private rented sector tenants who are in receipt of specific income-related benefits and living in homes that are poorly insulated or don't have a working central heating system. The Council and other agencies make referrals to the scheme.

1.23 In 2011/12, 574 referrals were made for Coventry households, resulting in 295 households receiving assistance. A lot of the assistance provided was for loft and cavity wall insulation, but it also included 88 gas boiler replacements, 44 new central heating systems and 38 heating system repairs. 2012/13 is the last year in which Warm Front assistance will be available with the Green Deal and ECO providing an alternative to it.

Tackling Fuel Poverty Through the Green Deal and ECO

1.24 The Green Deal is a major new energy efficiency initiative being introduced by the Government towards the end of 2012. It will be complemented by the Energy Company Obligation for low income households and for houses that are said to be hard to treat because they have solid brick walls or walls with narrow cavities. Green Deal and ECO present a new opportunity to tackle fuel poverty in Coventry.

1.25 Based on a 'pay as you save' model, Green Deal will enable energy efficiency measures to be installed without any up-front cost. Finance will be made available to householders who choose to take out a Green Deal Plan and repayments will be made by instalments attached to the householder's electricity bills. Key to its success will be a 'Golden Rule' requirement that the costs of the energy efficiency measures installed should not exceed the value of the fuel savings that can be achieved.

1.26 The ECO will work in a similar way to the CERT and CESP. Energy companies will be set targets that they are legally obliged to meet, requiring them to invest in measures such as insulation and heating improvements. The value of ECO funding is expected to be approximately £1.3bn pa nationally.

1.27 ECO funding will be available as a supplement to Green Deal where the 'Golden Rule' is not met and where the Green Deal is inappropriate. There will be three types of ECO assistance:

- Affordable Warmth Obligation – for low income, fuel poor, private households, independent of the Green Deal. It will be used for the installation of any measure that allows households to heat their homes more affordably, such as loft and cavity wall insulation and boiler repairs.
- Carbon Saving Obligation – to enable the installation of insulation for solid walls and walls with hard to treat cavities at private and social rented houses.
- Carbon Saving Communities Obligation (CSCO) – applicable to deprived LSOAs, to undertake street-by-street energy efficiency schemes in a similar way to CESP, such as solid wall, loft and cavity wall insulation at private and social rented houses. 51 LSOAs in Coventry have been designated for CSCO.

1.28 The Government expects that Green Deal and ECO together will result in substantial numbers of energy efficiency measures over the long term. Their national projections for installations by March 2015 include:

- Loft insulation 364,000
- Cavity wall insulation 830,000
- Solid wall insulation 147,000

1.29 Green Deal and ECO have been designed to be market-led with energy companies and Green Deal Providers competing to undertake works. It is therefore in the interest of the Council to show leadership and influence delivery in its area. By doing so, it can help to ensure that:

- The assistance in Coventry is appropriate to the council's Climate Change Strategy goals of reducing fuel poverty and cutting carbon emissions.
- The assistance helps low income vulnerable households in particular.
- The right types of houses and tenures benefit from the measures available.
- An area-based, street-by-street approach is adopted where possible, to enable economies of scale and to maximise the impact of external wall insulation schemes.
- Local businesses benefit and employment opportunities are created.

Preparing for the Green Deal and ECO

- 1.30 A sub-regional approach to the Green Deal and ECO is currently being developed under the direction of the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP and officers from the City Council and Warwickshire County Council have been collaborating on the development of proposals.
- 1.31 A set of ten strategic aspirations are proposed for Coventry and Warwickshire (set out in Appendix C). Additionally, four delivery options have been identified for appraisal, each conferring a different level of local authority leadership and influence:

Option 1 - Allow the market to deliver without reference to the strategic aspirations. This represents the 'do nothing option', where a variety of Green Deal Providers and energy companies pursue their own objectives.

Option 2 - Give open access to data and intelligence for all Green Deal Providers and energy companies, to influence their operations in the sub-region, but without endorsing any single organisation.

Option 3 - Procure and endorse one or more Green Deal Providers that can work in partnership with the local authorities to deliver the sub-region's ambitions.

Option 4 - Establish a local authority-led Green Deal Provider organisation solely for the purpose of delivering the ambitions.

- 1.32 The local authorities in the sub-region will have an important role to play if any of options 2, 3 or 4 are selected. Data on housing stock characteristics, fuel poverty, households in receipt of benefits and Energy Performance Certificate ratings will enable the effective planning and co-ordination of energy efficiency programmes. Intelligence on customer groups will also provide 'routes to market', and a clear and consistent planning policy framework will give certainty over external wall insulation opportunities. Community engagement will also be important in enabling low income vulnerable households in priority neighbourhoods to benefit from energy efficiency work. For options 3 or 4, the use of Local Authority brands will be critical in creating consumer confidence.

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995

- 1.33 Local authorities have a duty under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) to prepare reports on energy conservation measures for submission to the Secretary of State. The Government has recently issued revised guidance on the reporting arrangements under the new policy context of the Green Deal and ECO; a report on the new requirements will be brought to appropriate Cabinet Members later in the financial year.
- 1.34 The guidance refers to the significance of the local authority role in addressing fuel poverty and delivering carbon reduction plans - and highlights that they are uniquely placed to act as catalysts for change, using their position to improve the energy efficiency of all tenures of residential accommodation.

- 1.35 Under the new guidance, the Council will be required to produce and submit a first report by 31 March 2013 that sets out what it considers is 'practicable and cost effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation'. Significant improvements should, where appropriate, be achieved through 'the Green Deal/ECO, Renewable Heat Incentive and other initiatives' and through 'measures which an authority has developed to implement energy efficiency improvements cost-effectively in residential accommodation by using area based/street by street roll out involving local communities and partnerships'.
- 1.36 Measures are defined as including 'information, advice, education, promotion, any available financial assistance, making grants and loans and carrying out works'.
- 1.37 The Government will require local authorities to submit progress reports every two years. The report must be published on the Council's website so as to be accessible to residents and a link sent to the Secretary of State.

The guidance suggests that reports could cover:

1. Local energy efficiency ambitions and priorities.
2. Measures to take advantage of the Green Deal/ECO, Renewable Heat Incentive and other initiatives.
3. Area based/street by street measures.
4. The delivery timeframe and partnership arrangements.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Initial consideration of the 4 options described above has led to the conclusion that options 1 and 2 would not give the required level of Local Authority leadership and influence over energy efficiency programmes in the city.
- 2.2 Cabinet Members are asked therefore to indicate their views on the required level of leadership and influence and to sanction further work by officers to complete the option appraisal.
- 2.3 An Action Plan is currently being developed that will enable the option appraisal to be completed, leading to a recommendation to select and implement one of the two remaining options. It will also include a detailed prospectus that brings together data and intelligence from the Council and other sources, identifies the opportunities that are available for energy efficiency programmes and projects, and the priorities that need to be addressed, and describes the support and facilitation role that the Council and its partners will undertake.
- 2.4 It is recommended that Cabinet Members agree to receive subsequent reports that will:
- Provide more detailed recommendations in relation to the Green Deal and ECO.
 - Present a draft HECA report for approval in advance of the submission deadline.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 Because the Green Deal and ECO has not yet commenced, there is a lack of clarity at this stage about how energy companies and Green Deal Providers are likely to conduct their operations. Preliminary discussions are going to be held to gain insights into this and to understand what would make Coventry and Warwickshire an attractive place for them to focus their resources upon. There are no outcomes of this consultation to report on at the time of preparing this report.
- 3.2 The Green Deal and ECO Action Plan will in due course set out proposals for consumer testing and partner consultation.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1 Subject to the approval of further work by the Cabinet Members, the option appraisal will be undertaken as a matter of priority and officers will report back by the end of 2012.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Legal Services

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications of the recommendations within this report. Further work is proposed in the recommendations to prepare for the Green Deal and ECO for which advice will be sought from colleagues in procurement at the appropriate time to inform a future report to Members. Similarly, if grant funding is to be accessed for future fuel poverty work in the city the advice of colleagues in Finance will be obtained in order to properly discharge the Council's duties as accountable body - however no such funding is currently available.

5.2 Legal implications

Any data sharing which takes place between the Council and other organisations will be done in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other relevant information governance requirements.

6. Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to the achievement of the Council's key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Maximising the benefits of the Green Deal and ECO will help in the achievement of the Council's objectives for jobs and growth, and protecting vulnerable residents. It will also assist in the implementation of the joint City Council and Coventry Partnership Climate Change Strategy which was approved earlier in 2012.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Any relevant risks to the Council will be taken into account during the proposed option appraisal. The Green Deal and ECO Action Plan will incorporate measures to identify and mitigate risks.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The Green Deal and ECO present a new opportunity to tackle fuel poverty in Coventry. The report recommends that the options selected for appraisal should be those that provide the best opportunities for the Council to optimise the benefits of the Green Deal and ECO for local residents.

Appropriate existing staff resources will need to be allocated to ensure that:

- The option appraisal process is completed quickly.
- The Green Deal and ECO Action Plan, prospectus and HECA report are actioned within the required timeframes.
- Detailed work is undertaken with officers from the Warwickshire local authorities to ensure that preparatory work for the Green Deal and ECO is aligned.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

Fuel poverty disproportionately affects householders who are on low incomes. The adoption of proposals that give the City Council leadership and influence over the delivery of the Green Deal and ECO will improve the potential for fuel poor households to be assisted.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

The Climate Change Strategy for Coventry indicates that approximately 36% of the City's carbon dioxide emissions are from the housing stock. Domestic energy efficiency measures provided under the Green Deal and ECO will have a positive impact in reducing emissions.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

No implications have been identified at this stage. As the Green Deal and ECO Action Plan is implemented and partners are consulted, any implications will be identified then.

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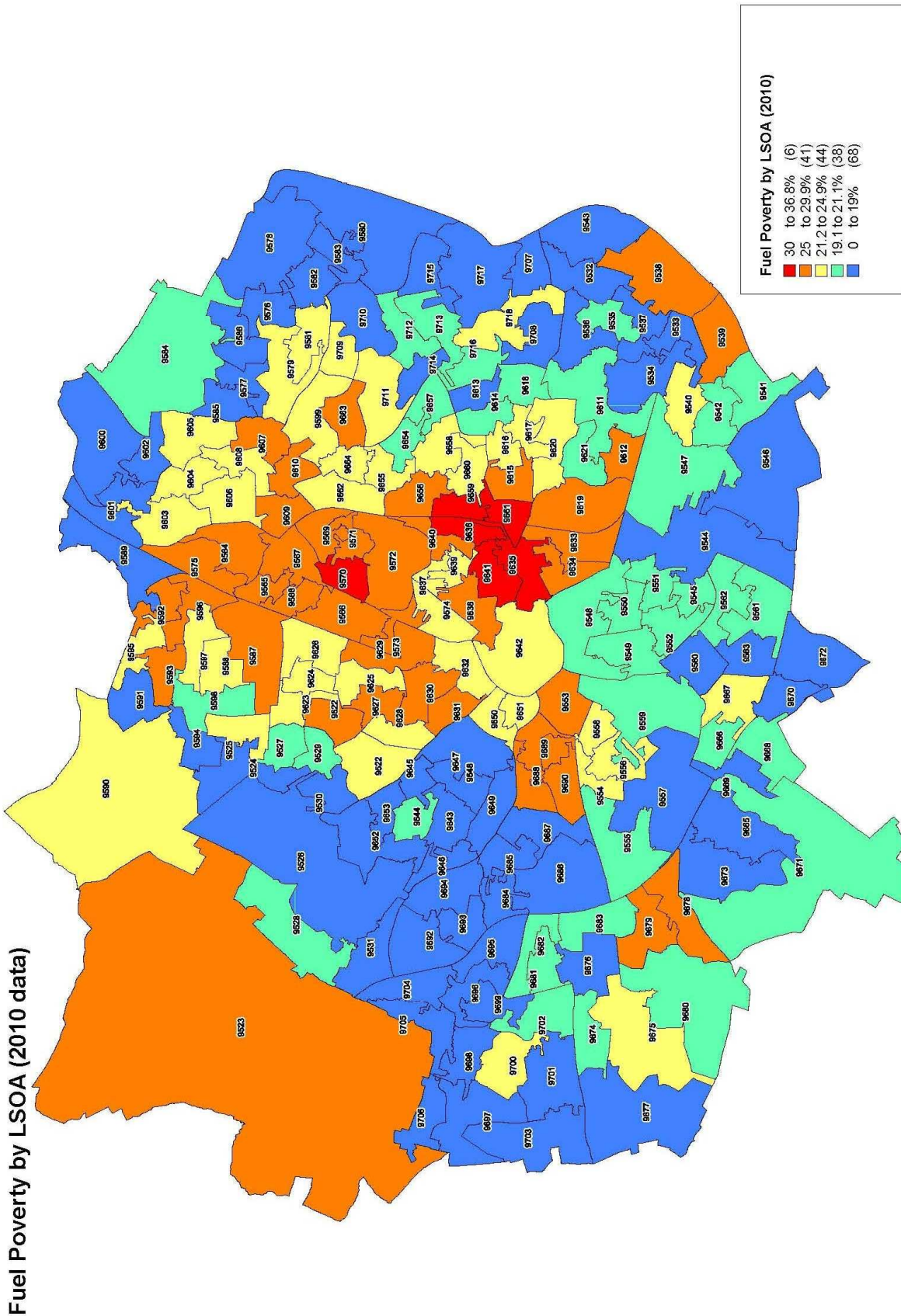
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Appendices

APPENDIX A – MAP OF FUEL POVERTY DISTRIBUTION ACROSS COVENTRY



APPENDIX B – OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS FROM 'THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF COLD HOMES AND FUEL POVERTY'.

Introduction

The report followed the earlier publication by the Marmot Review Team of 'Fair Society, Healthy Lives'. One of the recommendations of the earlier report was to improve the energy efficiency of housing across the social gradient in order to achieve affordable warmth and a reduction in energy usage and fuel poverty.

It reviewed the existing evidence of the direct and indirect health impacts suffered by those living in fuel poverty and cold housing. The studies reviewed showed that not only do cold houses and fuel poverty have an impact on physical and mental health, but also that policies aimed at improving the thermal efficiency of homes and reducing fuel poverty can reduce mortality and morbidity. The report concluded that improving the energy efficiency of housing has to occur in all communities and not just where it might be 'easy', because those households in most urgent need are those who are least likely to access support, such as private rented sector tenants.

Direct Health Impacts

- In 2009/10 there were an estimated 25,400 Excess Winter Deaths (EWD's) nationally. There is a relationship between EWD's, low thermal efficiency of housing and low indoor temperature. EWD's are almost 3 times higher in the coldest quarter of housing than in the warmest quarter. Around 40% of EWD's are attributable to cardio-vascular diseases, and around 33% are attributable to respiratory diseases.
- Children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a variety of respiratory problems than children living in warm homes.
- Mental health is negatively affected by fuel poverty for any age group. More than 1 in 4 adolescents living in cold housing are at risk of multiple mental health problems compared with 1 in 20 adolescents who have always lived in warm housing.
- Cold housing increases the level of minor illnesses such as colds and flu and exacerbates existing conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism.

Indirect Health Impacts

- Cold housing negatively affects children's educational attainment, emotional well-being and resilience.
- Fuel poverty negatively affects dietary opportunities and choices.
- Cold housing negatively affects dexterity and increases the risk of accidents and injuries in the home.

Population Groups Affected by Fuel Poverty and Cold Housing

Children – significant effects in terms of infant's weight gain, hospital admission rates, developmental status, and the severity and frequency of asthmatic symptoms.

Adolescents – clear negative effects on mental health.

Adults – measurable effects on physical health and well-being, particularly for vulnerable persons and those with existing health conditions.

Older people – higher mortality risk, adverse effects on physical and mental health.

APPENDIX C – PROPOSED COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE LEP LOW CARBON FOCUS GROUP STRATEGIC ASPIRATIONS FOR THE GREEN DEAL AND ENERGY COMPANY OBLIGATION

1. Maximise the amount of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding coming into Coventry and Warwickshire to enable fuel poverty to be tackled effectively.
2. Ensure the economic benefit of Green Deal/ECO is optimised to enable the creation of jobs, especially for young people.
3. Establish effective tools and approaches to accelerate the uptake of Green Deal to the able-to-pay sector.
4. Act as honest broker to ensure that residents of Coventry and Warwickshire have confidence that Green Deal offers represent good value for money with high standards of service and quality.
5. Improve the standard of the street scene across Coventry and Warwickshire through coherent and high quality retrofit measures.
6. Achieve the city and county carbon dioxide reduction targets for the domestic sector (at least 29% reduction by 2020 based on 2008 figures).
7. Improve the quality of life and well-being of residents through addressing fuel poverty and reducing energy costs.
8. Help to build sustainable communities through involving residents, public, private and third sector communities in retrofit activities - helping to drive job creation and up-skilling.
9. Maximise the uptake of Green Deal within the non-domestic sector in Coventry and Warwickshire.
10. Ensure that Coventry and Warwickshire is a beacon for how domestic and non-domestic sectors can become energy efficient and low carbon.