Oldham Affordable Warmth Strategy
2014 - 2017
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Foreword

I am delighted to introduce Oldham’s new Affordable Warmth Strategy which sets out how we will work with partners to ensure a co-ordinated approach to tackle fuel poverty and home energy efficiency in Oldham.

The last Strategy saw over £5 million investment into Oldham’s homes, 7500 energy efficiency measures installed and over 550 vulnerable households offered extra support over the 3 year period. Some of the schemes we have run have received National recognition like our joint investment agreement for tackling fuel poverty, our St Mary’s Passivhauses and our hugely successful collective switching campaign in 2012.

Unfortunately over the last 3 years energy prices have continued to rise and many of our residents have also been affected by the impacts of welfare reform, making heating their homes more and more difficult. This new Strategy shows that the Council and its partners are still committed to helping residents to achieve affordable warmth.

By improving Oldham’s housing stock we will help to ‘fuel poverty proof’ homes for residents now and in the future. As well as creating warmer and healthier homes, we are also reducing our carbon emissions and the impact on the environment.

Councillor David Hibbert

Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing

Public Health is now the responsibility of the Local Authority and this Strategy is extremely important to help us to reduce health inequalities, excess winter deaths and cold related illnesses in Oldham.

The innovative Warm Homes Oldham that is currently running will give us some valuable evidence on how improving homes can improve health and hopefully reduce the pressure and costs that are faced by our health services.

A partnership approach is imperative to success and we are thankful for the current partnership members who are funding Warm Homes Oldham, this is Oldham Council, Oldham Housing Investment Partnership and NHS Oldham’s Clinical Commissioning Group. Also we have to remember that health professionals and other partnership agencies front line staff are in a unique position to help people experiencing fuel poverty, as they visit patients in their own homes and are held in a position of trust.

Awareness of the effects of living in a cold, damp house is vitally important if we are to reduce the effects of fuel poverty on vulnerable households in Oldham and we are committed to work with partner agencies to make the Strategy a success and improve the health and well-being of the residents.

Councillor Barbara Brownridge

Cabinet Member for Social Care and Public Health
1.0 Background to Affordable Warmth

1.1 Affordable Warmth Strategy 2014-2017

This Affordable Warmth Strategy covers the period 2014- 2017, and as with the previous Strategy, it is accompanied by an annual delivery plan which outlines detailed actions on how the strategy will be implemented. The strategy sets out:

- Our challenges in delivering affordable warmth for Oldham residents
- What we are doing to address them and successes that have been made
- Our vision and priorities for the next 3 years

The Strategy has 3 key themes for delivery:

1. Increase uptake of energy efficiency measures and raise awareness of the benefits of being energy efficient
2. Improve the energy efficiency of housing stock (private, private rented and social housing)
3. Help tackle fuel poverty and improve health and wellbeing amongst the most vulnerable groups

Improving the energy efficiency of a home can deliver affordable warmth to households. Homes are then healthier and warmer, fuel bills are reduced and carbon emissions are lower, which in turn helps tackle climate change.

1.2 What is Affordable Warmth?

Affordable warmth is the ability to heat a home to an adequate level for household comfort and health without developing debt as a result. The lack of affordable warmth is known as fuel poverty.

Before July 2013, households that spent more than 10% of their income on heating (to achieve adequate warmth, usually 21°C in the living area and 18°C elsewhere) were defined as being in ‘fuel poverty’. This definition is proposed to be changed following the publication of the Government’s new Fuel Poverty Strategy later this year (see section X).

With the rising cost of energy, more and more people struggle to afford heating costs. Living in a cold home has an impact on residents’ physical and mental wellbeing, damaging health and affecting their quality of life. The elderly, children and those with a disability or long-term illness are especially vulnerable.

There are three main causes of fuel poverty:

- Poor energy efficiency in the home
- High energy prices
- Low household income

1.3 What does this Strategy do?

The development of Oldham’s Affordable Warmth Strategy ensures a strategic approach is taken to help reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions of our housing stock. The strategy enables links to be made between relevant policies, agencies and represents commitment by key stakeholders in Oldham to improve partnership working and action. It also ensures that we lever as much funding as possible from various sources into Oldham.
Additionally, as a co-operative borough, we all have a responsibility to support one another to achieve this ambition. Simultaneously, we acknowledge the important relationship of key stakeholders with the Council in developing a future where residents, partners and staff work together to improve affordable warmth throughout the borough. Enabling residents to be able to afford to heat their homes is also one of our Cooperative Housing Offer’s main outcomes – this Strategy is the delivery method of this work.

1.4 Measuring Fuel Poverty

In 2010, the number of fuel poor households in England (using 10% definition) was estimated at around 3.5 million, around 16.4% of all households. High fuel costs and cold winters have exacerbated the problem. For example it was estimated that for every 1% increase in fuel prices, another 40,000 households entered fuel poverty.

Chart 1 – Fuel poverty in each country in the UK, 1996 to 2011

The chart above shows the long term trends for fuel poverty levels in the UK (10% definition). Year on year reductions are seen between 1996 and 2003, due to a combination of falling fuel prices and rising incomes. This trend then begins to reverse from 2004 onwards, in line with fuel price increases (between 2004-2009 domestic electricity prices rose by over 75% and gas by 122%). In 2010 and 2011, with the combined effect of rising incomes and improving energy efficiency standards, fuel poverty fell for the first time since 2003.1

In July 2013, the Government set out a new definition of fuel poverty, which is set to be adopted officially in the new Fuel Poverty strategy (due 2014).

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1 Annual Report on Fuel Poverty Statistics 2013 (Department of Energy and Climate Change)
Under this new ‘Low Income High Cost’ definition a household is considered to be fuel poor where:

- They have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
- Were they to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

The low income high cost measure consists of two parts:

- The number of households that have both low incomes and high fuel costs (the bottom left quadrant in the diagram below).
- The depth of fuel poverty amongst these households. This is measured in terms of a fuel poverty gap, which represents the difference between the modelled fuel bill for each household, and the reasonable cost threshold for the household. This is summed for all households that have both low income and high costs to give an aggregate fuel poverty gap.

![Diagram illustrating the definition of fuel poverty](image)

**Figure 1: The low income high costs definition**

Under the new definition of fuel poverty, the number of fuel poor households in England had fallen to 2.39 million (from 3.5 million using old definition) in 2011, this represents 11% of the population. The average ‘fuel poverty gap’ is reported to be £438.\(^2\)

Government are going to continue to report statistics on both definitions. In Oldham it is felt that the 10% definition is more understandable and easier to measure locally, so we will continue to use this as the main measure of fuel poverty. See section 3 for fuel poverty levels in Oldham using the old and new definitions.

1.5 The Effects of Cold Temperatures on Health

There are many illnesses which are made worse by cold temperatures:

**Cardio-vascular disease:**

- The cold causes thickening of blood, therefore increases blood pressure, leading to an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes

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Respiratory Illness:
- Dampness is associated with cold houses; damp increases mould growths, which can cause asthma and respiratory infections
- The cold lowers resistance to respiratory functions
- Coldness impairs lung function and can trigger broncho-constriction in asthma and COPD

Musculoskeletal Diseases:
- Arthritis and damaged joints
- Back pain

Cold houses affect mobility and increase falls and other injuries:
- Symptoms of arthritis become worse in cold damp houses.
- Strength and dexterity decrease as temperatures drop, increasing the risk of non-intentional injuries and falls, particularly in older people

Mental and social health:
- Damp, cold housing is associated with an increase in mental health problems, particularly depression
- Some people become socially isolated as they are reluctant to invite friends to a cold house
- The choice between ‘heat or eat’ may often result in poor diet which in turn can cause a range of illnesses including cancers, strokes and heart disease
- Adverse effects on children’s education and potentially future employment opportunities

Increased illness due to cold conditions puts a strain on local general practices, hospitals and other health services. The Department of Health estimates that there are 8 extra hospital admissions for each excess winter death.

Excess winter deaths
In the winter period of 2012/13 provisional figures from the Office of National Statistics show 31,100 more people died in England and Wales than in the summer months. This was a 29% on the previous year. More excess winter deaths occurred in females than in males. The majority of the deaths (25,600 or 82.3%) were in those aged 75 years and older. With 4,600 excess winter deaths, the North West region had the highest winter mortality index in England and Wales.

Underlying causes of excess deaths in winter
The latest data for the underlying causes of death is from 2011/12 when there were 24,200 excess winter deaths in England and Wales.

Around a third of excess winter deaths were a result of circulatory diseases (including heart attacks and strokes) and around a third were due to respiratory illness. The majority of excess winter deaths are in older people, who may already have underlying health conditions making them vulnerable to the effects of cold. In a sixth of the deaths the underlying cause was dementia or Alzheimer’s disease. Other groups who are at risk of the effects of the cold are people with long term ill-health, including mental health problems, people with disabilities and babies and young children.
2.0 Affordable Warmth Policy Context

2.1 Current Government Policy

Since the last Affordable Warmth Strategy (2010-2013) many of the Government policies and programmes have changed, and in most cases support has been scaled down. The CERT (carbon emissions reduction target) and CESP (community energy savings programme) and Warm Front schemes (which funded central heating upgrades for low income households) – all finished during 2013. The current financial support for the most vulnerable households is as follows:

- **Warm Home Discount**
  Participating energy suppliers help low income and vulnerable households meet energy costs by providing a £135 credit to their winter bill. Certain groups receive the discount automatically, whilst others have to apply.

- **Winter Fuel Payment**
  Annual payment of up to £300 for pensioner households.

- **Cold Weather Payment**
  Payment during periods of severely cold weather to pensioners who receive pension credit or people on income-related benefits who meet certain criteria.

- **Energy Company Obligation (ECO)**
  ECO is an obligation on the ‘Big 6’ energy providers to deliver energy efficiency measures to low income households, vulnerable customers and homeowners living in older properties. There are three obligations under the ECO:
  - **Carbon Saving Community Obligation (CSCO)**
    This provides insulation measures to households in specified areas of low income.
  - **Carbon Saving Obligation (also known as CERO, Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation)**
    This covers the installation of measures such as solid wall and hard-to-treat cavity wall insulation which ordinarily can’t be financed solely through Green Deal
  - **Affordable Warmth Obligation (also known as HHCRO, Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation)**
    This provides heating and insulation measures to consumers living in private tenure properties that receive particular means-tested benefits.

*The recent reduction of ‘green levies’ on consumers energy bills has had an affect on ECO funding levels and the ECO scheme is currently under review by Government, so the above is subject to change.*

- **Green Deal**
  The Green Deal is a new financing mechanism that lets people pay for energy-efficiency improvements through savings on their energy bills rather than upfront. It was officially launched in January 2013 and AGMA are procuring a framework of Green Deal Providers at present to start delivering in 2014.

2.2 Home Energy Conservation Act

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA), placed a statutory requirement on all Local Authorities to prepare a report setting out the energy conservation measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in its area.

Our [HECA report](#) is a 2 year plan and its actions are closely aligned to those in this Strategy.
2.3 Fuel Poverty: A Framework for Action

As well as the new definition that is proposed, Government also published a Framework for Action document.

Their forthcoming new Fuel Poverty Strategy will focus on ensuring that fuel poor households attain a certain standard of energy efficiency in their home. They have also set out some guiding principles for future policy to follow:

- Prioritisation of the households that are suffering from the most severe problem (i.e. biggest fuel poverty gap);
- Supporting priority households through cost-effective policies;
- Ensuring that vulnerability is reflected in fuel poverty policies.

2.4 Smart Meters

These show how much energy is being used inside people’s home, through a display. They communicate directly with energy suppliers, meaning that utility companies do not need to go to homes to read meters in the future. They will enable residents to manage their energy usage better, save money and reduce emissions. They will bring an end to estimated billing – residents will only be billed for the energy they actually use.

Smart meters will be rolled out as standard across the country by 2019 but there will not be a legal obligation on individuals to have one. Energy companies will be required to install smart meters and take all reasonable steps to reach everyone.

2.5 Renewable Energy

With the growth of the renewable energy market in the UK and national incentives placed upon the adoption of renewable energies (e.g. Renewable Heat Incentive, Feed-in-tariff), renewable energies are emerging as a possible solution to cheaper and sustainable energy, an ideal solution for fuel poverty.

Apart from the initial set up cost which is often a considerable amount, renewable energy can be viewed as a route to address fuel poverty issues, as in the long run renewable energy can be a cost efficient way to keep warm and obtain fuel etc. In recent years there have been various government incentives to encourage members of the public (i.e. private residents), and social housing providers to install renewable energy solutions.

Oldham Council is looking at ways to work cooperatively and utilise our relationship with residents, partners and local businesses to increase the installation of renewables across the borough, both on homes and public buildings. Even where renewable energy is not directly benefiting residents through a supply of free or low-cost heat or electricity, the revenue streams generated by renewables can potentially make a contribution towards projects targeted at alleviating fuel poverty, which is one of our co-operative housing objectives.

2.5.1 Solar photovoltaic installations (Solar PV)

Data from DECC shows that Oldham is below the national average for number of domestic solar photovoltaic (PV) installations:
Oldham (March 2013) = 430 installations. This is 503 LESS than the Great Britain value mean of 933 installations.³

Reasons for this may be geographical and environmental. The reduction of the feed-in-tariff has also made the technology a less attractive venture.

As a local authority we have not conducted any domestic renewable energy schemes yet. It has been difficult to deliver such projects on private properties, where as a local authority we do not own the properties; other issues have also included reduction of the national feed-in tariff incentive. We have liaised with partners including social housing providers and have supported their renewable projects and there are details with the action plan of what we intend to do this year to support installations.

2.5.2 Renewable Heat Installs

At the time of writing, there have been very few renewable heat installations providing warmth to domestic homes. However, First Choice Homes Oldham and the Council recently signed a contract with British Gas to convert the St Mary’s social housing estate district heat network to run from biomass-fired boilers.

The new biomass system takes advantage of the Renewable Heat Incentive to build a more sustainable business model for the heat network; which together with the retrofitting of homes on St Mary’s with solid wall insulation, should prevent the heating bills of St Mary’s residents rising as much as they would have done without the refurbishment.

2.6 Local and Regional Strategy Context

2.6.1 Oldham

Oldham’s new Affordable Warmth Strategy (2014 -2017) feeds into the overarching ‘Oldham and Rochdale Housing Strategy 2012-2015’. As well as directly contributing to a number of other corporate strategies & goals, including:

- Corporate Plan (objective of ‘Confident Communities’)
- Home Energy Conservation Act Report (HECA)
- Oldham’s Climate Change Strategy
- District Partnerships Action Plans

The first Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Oldham aims to drive the improvement of health and wellbeing in Oldham by fundamentally transforming the social, economic, and physical environment into one that positively supports people to achieve the best possible level of health and general wellbeing across all of Oldham’s communities.

Delivering affordable warmth for people in Oldham experiencing fuel poverty has an important part to play in contributing to the delivery of this strategy, and for addressing health inequalities in the Borough.

Oldham is committed to developing a Co-operative future; one where citizens, partners and staff work together to improve the borough. We want all members of the community to play an active part in building our co-operative borough. This means everybody doing their bit.

‘Oldham’s Co-operative Housing Offer’ outlines the link between existing housing-related activity by partners in Oldham Housing Investment Partnership and Oldham’s Co-operative Council. Outcome one of this ‘Offer’ is to enable residents to be able to heat their homes.

The fuel poverty joint investment agreement (see section 5.2), signed by partners and supported by the Health and Wellbeing Board, was designed to lift over 1,000 households out of Fuel Poverty, is a clear example of key agencies collaborating to make a difference to people’s lives, and demonstrates the importance of the connectivity between people’s health and the environment in which they live.

2.6.2 Greater Manchester

We work closely with the Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service (GMEAS) to deliver initiatives relating to affordable warmth; these are detailed within the action plan. In turn, our local strategy will contribute towards regional ambitions such as:

- The GM Climate Change Strategy aims to reduce carbon emissions by 48% across Greater Manchester by 2020 based on 1990 levels.
- The (Draft) GM Retrofit Strategy aims that all housing stock in Greater Manchester will achieve an EPC rating of B, and 17kg CO$_2$ per m$^2$ by 2035. The 10% remaining homes will achieve a minimum of EPC C rating by 2035.$^4$

Developing a low carbon economy is one of the priorities of the Greater Manchester Strategy. The Low Carbon Hub Board is responsible, on behalf of the GMCA, for developing and putting in place the delivery arrangements for Greater Manchester’s Climate Change Strategy and other environmental priorities. It has four primary aims:

- Realising the economic opportunities associated with transition to a low carbon economy;
- Supporting Greater Manchester’s collective 48% carbon reduction target by 2020;
- Increasing awareness and understanding leading to behavioural change;
- Preparing Greater Manchester to adapt to the unavoidable effects of climate change.

Domestic buildings account for 35% of the direct CO$_2$ emissions across Greater Manchester, highlighting the importance of household level actions which are delivered through local plans like this.

2.7 Challenges

There are many challenges faced in delivering Affordable Warmth nationally and in Oldham, some of which have already been explored. The main challenges we see over the next 3 years are:

- **Welfare reform** – Current changes to benefits will lead to decreasing incomes and therefore more people in fuel poverty and more extreme fuel poverty for those who were already struggling to pay their bills
- **Recession** – Again increased unemployment means more people with low incomes, in the house during most of the day unable to heat their homes
- **Rise in fuel prices** – fuel prices are predicted to rise above inflation levels
- **End of national financial incentives** – the recent end to Government funded programmes (Warm Front) and changes to Utility Company Obligations have meant that more households now have to pay for energy efficiency measures. The instability

$^4$ Greater Manchester Draft Housing Retrofit Strategy 2011
of the current ECO and Green Deal programmes is also causing uncertainty and delays in delivery from the market e.g. the recent announcement about removal of the £50 ‘green levy’ from people’s bills, which has had a negative effect on ECO funding rates.

### 3.0 Facts and Figures

#### 3.1 Oldham’s Fuel Poverty Levels

Oldham’s level of fuel poverty has fluctuated over the 5 years 2006-2011; however in line with National trends have significantly reduced since 2009. It is worth noting that the latest statistics available to us are from 2011, energy price rises have continued since 2011 so it is likely that current fuel poverty levels are probably higher than reported below.

**Table 1: Trends in Oldham Fuel Poverty Levels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of fuel poverty (using 10% definition)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>17.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The latest 2011 figures at 15.8% (14,182 households) is 1.2% more than the England average but puts us as having the lowest levels of fuel poverty in Greater Manchester. As explained in section 1.4 Government say the decrease in fuel poverty in 2010 and 2011 was the result of a rise in income, and a reduction in energy use, through improvements in the energy efficiency of housing, this combined offset the price increases seen in 2011.

**Table 2: Levels of Fuel Poverty in Greater Manchester**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Level of households in fuel poverty</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oldham</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wigan</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tameside</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bury</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rochdale</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salford</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockport</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trafford</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
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5 DECC Fuel Poverty Statistics 2011

6 DECC Fuel Poverty Statistics 2011
Under the new ‘low income, high cost’ definition our fuel poverty level would be 11.3% (for 2011), compared to the GM average of 12% and the England average of 11.7%.

**Figure 2: Oldham Map of Fuel Poverty levels in 2011 (10% definition)**

![Oldham Map of Fuel Poverty levels in 2011 (10% definition)](image)

**Figure 3: Oldham Map of Fuel Poverty levels in 2011 (new definition)**

![Oldham Map of Fuel Poverty levels in 2011 (new definition)](image)
Fuel poverty levels across wards within Oldham vary, Chart 2 shows those areas which are above the Oldham and national averages. Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of fuel poverty levels by ward using both types of fuel poverty definitions.

**Chart 2: Fuel Poverty by Ward (10% Definition)**

3.2 Oldham’s Health Facts

The main causes of death for people in Oldham are identified as circulatory diseases, (including heart disease and strokes), cancers, respiratory diseases and digestive disorders. There is a clear need to continue to target prevention, early detection and treatment towards those diseases which cause the largest number of deaths in Oldham.

Death rates from respiratory disease in Oldham are higher than the England average. There is an established relationship between respiratory disease, deprivation and fuel poverty. The largest proportion of respiratory disease deaths for both males and females are in the most deprived areas of the borough.

The wards with the highest emergency admission rates for asthma (Alexandra, Coldhurst, St. Mary’s and Werneth) are the four most deprived wards in Oldham. More children than adults were admitted to hospital.

BME communities are more likely to live in income deprived areas of Oldham and suffer the consequences of fuel poverty and are at higher risk of being admitted to hospital as an emergency for asthma.
Table 3: Excess winter deaths in Oldham over the period 2006/7 to 2011/12

In Oldham the number of excess winter deaths has ranged from 130 in 2006/7 to 230 in 2008/9. These occur mainly in those over 65 years (especially those over 85 years), particularly women. It is calculated that 80% of the excess winter deaths are due to cold temperatures, with around 20% related to other factors, such as air pollution, lack of exposure to sunlight, flu and diet. As many of these deaths may be preventable it is important that efforts to reduce these continue.

In Oldham, in 2011/12 there were 100 excess winter deaths. Details of the causes are not yet available.

3.3 Oldham's Domestic Energy Use

Domestic energy use in Oldham is falling per head, and faster than across England as a whole. Energy use disproportionate in different areas of Oldham, in fact the most energy prolific areas (Lydgate & Delph) are now using exactly four times as much energy per head as the poorest (Coldhurst) – see Appendix 2 for full map.

The gap between highest and lowest usage within areas is decreasing- from 9.76 in 2008 to 9.14 now. However the poorest areas are still using less, even where they can't possibly have been heating their houses properly in the first place. Some areas usage (e.g. Barker Street) is so low it seems unlikely that these residents are heating their properties at all.

Table 4: Trends in Domestic Energy Use 2005-2011 (Megawatt Hours per year per head of population)

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</table>
The 2011 Census showed that only 2% of Oldham households are living without central heating. Although this seems positive it still accounts for 1739 households.

4.0 Consultation

4.1 Resident Consultation

The ‘You and Your Community’ Survey was conducted in 2013 by the market research company Ipsos Mori. In total, 2,862 residents completed the questionnaire which equates to a response rate of 12%. Some of the findings from that survey related to fuel poverty are explored below:

Respondents were asked their level of concern with a range of financial stress factors. One of those factors was their ability to pay utility bills such as gas, water and electricity. In total, 35% of respondents felt ‘concerned’ about it. This was the second highest level of concern when compared to the other eight stress factors (e.g. ‘being made redundant’). Only their current financial situation had a higher level of concern (46% were concerned).

Residents were asked in the survey whether they felt able to keep their home warm enough during the winter months. Most Oldham respondents (73%) said they can keep their home warm enough during the winter, but one in four (26%) said they cannot. The proportion that cannot do so has gone up significantly over the last three years (up seven percentage points from 19% in 2010).

These overall figures were broken down to assess whether certain groups within Oldham are more affected than other groups. It was found that tenants were more likely to say that they cannot keep their home warm, be they private tenants (50%) or social tenants (42%). This contrasts with only one in five owner-occupiers (19%). BME respondents are also twice as likely as White respondents to say they are unable to heat their home well enough (44% compared with 21%). Half of lone parents are also unable to do this (49% compared with 26% overall).

The problem is greater among those with wider disadvantages to do with work or money. Over half of unemployed respondents cannot keep their home warm in winter (55% compared with 23% of those in work). Neither can half of those with a net household income below £8,740 a year (50% compared with only seven per cent if net household income is at least £26,571 a year). Nor can almost half of respondents in receipt of benefits (45% compared with 20% of non-recipients).

People with health problems are also more likely to say they cannot keep their home warm enough: 53% of those in poor health and 35% of those with a limiting long-term health condition or disability, compared with 26% overall.

Across the wards of Oldham, inability to keep their home warm enough in winter is greatest in Alexandra (42%), Medlock Vale (38%), Waterhead (38%), Werneth (38%) and St. Mary’s (37%). This correlates with the fact that all these wards have higher than the Oldham average level of fuel poverty (see Chart X).

4.2 Specific consultation & Research

In line with our cooperative values, there was specific consultation with Elected Members and wider partners on the new Affordable Warmth Strategy to ensure our shared ambition and approach reflected the needs of Oldham residents. The key priority was to ensure the most vulnerable groups were targeted with our actions. The consultation also helped to identify the partner agencies who should be involved in delivery.
5.0 - Key Achievements

5.1 Achievements

During the previous Strategy 2010-2013 significant achievements have been made. Below are some of the highlights from the past 3 years under the main objectives, annual reports for each year are also available upon request.

Headline figures:

- £15,697,985 investment in Affordable Warmth schemes (majority external funding)
- 19,866 energy efficiency measures installed in Oldham homes

There have been a vast range of schemes delivered over the 3 year period; here are some of the more significant ones:

Increase uptake of energy efficiency measures and raise awareness of the benefits of being energy efficient

- In 2012 Oldham Council ran the UK’s third collective energy switching scheme. This resulted in 8700 households signing up, with average savings of £171 of those who switched. Since the success of the Oldham scheme, Greater Manchester launched their own scheme and the first GM auction in January had over 35,000 households sign up.
- Winter Health Events have been held every winter in partnership with Age UK to deliver practical advice and support to residents attending

Improve the energy efficiency of housing stock

- Heatseekers thermal imaging programme was ran in 2010 which led to 2287 loft or cavity wall installations
- The ‘Get me Toasty’ insulation scheme provided 3596 free loft and cavity wall insulation installs during 2010-2013
- Warm Front (the Governments National central heating grant programme which finished in January 2013) provided 2319 households in Oldham with new heating systems. Oldham had consistently high uptake of the scheme and often topped the North West install tables
- The Oldham St Mary’s development is the first in the North West to include 4 Code for Sustainable Homes level 6 and 2 Passivhaus properties.

Help tackle fuel poverty and improve health and wellbeing amongst the most vulnerable groups

- Oldham had a ‘Warmth for Health’ scheme which provided free insulation to residents who had health conditions, this provided 846 installs to households
- Over £130,000 was secured from the Department of Health ‘Warm Homes Health People’ funding over the 2 winter periods that it was available. This has been used to deliver a number of schemes, but most significantly was ‘Keep Cosy’ which has helped over 700 vulnerable households. Keep Cosy offers home energy checks, energy efficiency freebies installed, emergency heating repairs, hot meal delivery and referrals onto other preventative services.
• A £190,000 grant was won from DECC in January 2013 to pay for boiler replacements for vulnerable households. This helped 73 homes have new heating, 37 of which had no working heating in place before we helped.

More generally over the past 3 years, the profile of fuel poverty and affordable warmth has been significantly increased within the Council and its partners. Oldham has a strong network of professionals who help to deliver these schemes and ensure their success with a good communication network. Quarterly newsletters are produced and distributed widely and a strong brand has been created for affordable warmth messaging.

5.2 Warm Homes Oldham Scheme

More recently a huge achievement for Oldham has been the development of the Warm Homes Oldham scheme. This was enabled by some innovative upfront investment by Oldham partners who recognised our shared ambition in helping Oldham residents.

Oldham Council, the Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the Oldham Housing Investment Partnership (OHIP) signed the UK’s first ‘Joint Investment Agreement’ to help tackle fuel poverty in Oldham. The joint investment agreement aims to lift a thousand individuals out of fuel poverty over the course of a year (2013/14) by investing £200,000 upfront. Oldham Council and OHIP have invested £77,500 each and the CCG £45,000.

There can be serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of those living in fuel poverty – particularly for the elderly. By reducing fuel poverty, the partners therefore hope to reduce demand, and therefore make significant savings, in other areas like health care and social services. As such, for every individual lifted out of fuel poverty Oldham CCG will cash £250 and Oldham Council £50 into a fund for investment into future projects.

The scheme is being delivered by Keepmoat in partnership with the CAB and offers a variety of help to households who are struggling:

• **ECO grants for energy efficiency improvement e.g.** Loft & cavity wall insulation, Solid wall insulation, Hard to treat cavity insulation

• **Heating improvements** – residents have to be on means tested benefits to qualify for the heating upgrades under ECO. If they aren’t but are still in need we will provide them with emergency radiators and apply for Utility trust fund grants to try & help.

• **Providing advice and training** to householders on how to use energy more efficiently

• **Maximising income** of those households, this is being done in partnership with CAB and helps households to get out of fuel debt (by applying for trust fund grants), help with bills.tariff switches, help with getting off prepayment meter and benefits checks

Residents who aren’t in fuel poverty can still access support through the service through the ECO funding grant improvements.

The project was launched in August 2013 and was originally set up as a 1 year pilot project and the partnership have just agreed to continue the project past March 2014 (see delivery plan for more details). The first year of the project has seen some great outcomes, out of the 586 households that have been assisted, 439 of these have been brought out of fuel poverty, accounting for 1074 people; therefore we met our target to get 1000 people out of fuel poverty in the first year. Other key outcomes from year one have included:
- Over £1.2 million of ECO grant funding brought in through the scheme
- 364 boilers installed, 80 external wall insulation, 19 cavities & lofts installed
- Average saving per household helped is £792
- £45,700 extra benefits secured
- £30,446 worth of trust fund grants secured for homes not on benefits with poor heating

Households who we work with are also asked to sign consent forms to give us access to their health records. Where consent has been given we are then able to track whether the project has reduced costs to the health sector by remotely monitoring NHS interventions.

The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield University has been commissioned to independently evaluate the impact of the scheme. Their first report is due in June 2014 which will look at the pre & post questionnaire responses and outcomes of the scheme. The following year they will then analyse the health service use of the households to compare 12 months data before they had the works done to 12 months after, to see what impact if any has been made.

### 5.3 Energy Efficiency of Social Housing in Oldham

Work has continued by employing our co-operative approach and network of partner agencies to improve the energy efficiency of their houses. The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the adopted Government methodology for calculating the energy performance of dwellings, as you can see below the SAP has generally improved for most of our Housing Associations over the first 2 years of the strategy. The SAP ratings cannot be compared between organisations as they all have a very different stock profile, which affects their SAP rating greatly. Oldham Housing Investment Partnership have supported the Warm Homes Oldham scheme this year and their support has been invaluable in getting the project running.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Places for People</td>
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<td>Regenda</td>
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<td>63.81</td>
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</table>
As well as capital works to improve the energy efficiency of their properties, many of our Housing Associations also provide assistance to their tenants to get out of fuel debt, switch fuel suppliers and tariffs through their Financial Inclusion Teams.

5.4 Private Rented Sector

With a high prevalence of poorly insulated, energy inefficient buildings, the Private Rented Sector has some of the biggest improvements to make. For example;

- The sector has the highest proportion of least energy efficient homes – 5.8% of G rated properties compared with 3.4% in owner-occupier.
- 20% of households in the private rented sector are fuel poor.\(^7\)

DECC have in recent years embarked on closely regulating this sector. The Energy Act 2011 enables the Government to regulate to help ensure the take up of cost effective energy efficiency improvements in the Private Rented Sector:

- From April 2016, domestic landlords should not be able to unreasonably refuse requests from their tenants for consent to energy efficiency improvements, where financial support is available, such as the Green Deal and/or the Energy Company Obligation (ECO); and
- From April 2018, all private rented properties (domestic and non-domestic) should be brought up to a minimum energy efficiency standard rating, likely to be set at EPC rating “E”.

6.0 - Our Priorities

The Strategy has 3 priority aims for delivery:

**Aim one: Increase uptake of energy efficiency measures and raise awareness of the benefits of being energy efficient**

We will do this by:

- Influencing residents on the benefits of behaviour change and enabling individuals to help themselves
- Working collaboratively by supporting partners with events to increase awareness of affordable warmth schemes
- Supporting residents to save money through innovative energy switching campaigns

**Aim two: Improve the energy efficiency of housing stock (private, private rented and social housing)**

We will do this by:

- Maximise the amount of ECO funding spent in Oldham through delivery of our Warm Homes Oldham scheme
- Work with Registered Provider’s to develop and deliver their own affordable warmth strategies and initiatives
- Encourage residents to take up the ‘Green Deal’
- Delivery of the Greater Manchester Housing Retrofit strategy and forthcoming action plan to reduce domestic carbon emissions
- Maximising the number of new homes which achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 6 by 2016

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\(^7\) Getting a Green Deal: Information for Householders and Landlords. (DECC 2013)
Aim three: Help tackle fuel poverty and improve health and wellbeing amongst the most vulnerable groups

We will do this by:
- Continue to deliver the joint investment scheme ‘Warm Homes Oldham’ with the CCG, OHIP and Public Health
- Monitor the health impacts of the above scheme and share results with wider partners
- Raise awareness among the health sector of the impacts of fuel poverty and how they can help
- Develop and improve the referral system for those living in fuel poverty
- Generate income for fuel poverty programmes through delivery of community energy schemes

We want all members of the community to play an active part in reducing fuel poverty and carbon emissions and working towards a co-operative borough. By focusing on these three priorities, we’re ensuring the right environment is in place for residents to help themselves and the appropriate support is available to achieve these aims.

7.0 Next Steps

7.1 How we will monitor performance

We recognise the importance of ensuring that we manage and monitor our performance in relation to our targets. The strategy has been developed in consultation with our partners who have a key role to play in delivering specific actions. The performance of this strategy will be based around the annual delivery plans.

The delivery plan will be monitored by the core steering group of representatives of the main partners including Oldham Council, Oldham Public Health, Oldham Housing Investment Partnership, FCHO and GMEAS. Meetings of the core group will take place at the end of each quarter, where delivery review of the actions within that quarter will take place. The results of this will then form part of the quarterly newsletter which is to be distributed widely to stakeholders and elected members. Annually overall progress will be reported to the Oldham Leadership Board, Oldham Strategic Housing Board, OHIP Board & the Oldham Health and Wellbeing Board.

7.2 How we will share our achievements with Oldham residents

It is important to share our progress and successes with Oldham residents and partners. Achievements will be cascaded to residents as part of the communications plan through various methods including; press releases, dedicated web-pages, resident’s magazines and district partnership communications where appropriate. By sharing our successes, we are also able to highlight our co-operative approach as an example of effective partnership working and encourage others to adopt the same outlook.

7.3 Resourcing the Strategy

Priorities and actions are resourced through a variety of funding streams, partners and human resources. It is not possible to identify all of the resources that will be available over
the time period of this strategy. Many of the energy efficiency measures which we aim to deliver will be funded through central Government funding sources, such as ECO.

FCHO and other Housing Associations in Oldham will also be allocating funding for energy efficiency measures and affordable warmth activities however the amounts are not defined and tend to be part of wider programmes such as their refurbishment work.

8.0 Contacts

Housing Team
Principal Housing Energy Officer
Neighbourhoods Directorate, Oldham Council
Tel: 0161 770 4798
Email: housingstrategy@oldham.gov.uk

9.0 Partner Websites
- Oldham Council
- Oldham Housing Investment Partnership
- Age UK Oldham
- Oldham CAB
- GM Low Carbon Hub
- Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service

10.0 Glossary
- CO² – Carbon Dioxide, emissions of which are harmful to the environment.
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) refers to chronic bronchitis and emphysema, a pair of two commonly co-existing diseases of the lungs in which the airways become narrowed.
- Greater Manchester Energy Advice Service (GMEAS) - previously the local Energy Savings Trust Centre, giving energy efficiency advice out free to residents of Greater Manchester and support to Local Authorities on housing retrofit schemes
- Excess Winter Death – is calculated as winter deaths minus the deaths in the non-winter period. The winter period is defined as December to March, non-winter is defined as the preceding August to November and the following April to July
- First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO)- currently manage Oldham’s 12,000 former Council homes following stock transfer in 2011.
- Housing Health Safety Rating System (HHSRS), used to assess the extent to which a dwelling poses a risk to its occupants.
- Low Carbon Economic Area (LCEA)– Greater Manchester has been designated the first LCEA for the ‘built environment’ with targets in place over the next 5 years to save carbon and create additional jobs
- Oldham Housing Investment Partnership (OHIP) is the social housing sector partnership for Oldham
- Registered Provider (RP) are government-funded not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable housing. They include housing associations, trusts and cooperatives.
- Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the UK Government's recommended method system for measuring the energy rating of residential dwellings, the measure goes from 1 to 100 – the higher the SAP rating the more energy efficient a house is
- Thermal image- are visual displays of the amount of infrared energy emitted, transmitted, and reflected by an object, in this case a house
### Appendix 1

#### Table 6: Levels of Fuel Poverty by Ward for Both Definitions (DECC 2011)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward Name</th>
<th>No of households</th>
<th>% of households in fuel poverty under the LIHC definition</th>
<th>Rank under LIHC definition</th>
<th>% of households in fuel poverty under the less than 10% definition</th>
<th>Rank under the 10% definition</th>
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### Appendix 2:

#### Figure 4: Domestic Energy Consumption in Oldham

![Energy Consumption: Domestic - Per Capita Consumption of Domestic Electricity and Gas](image_url)