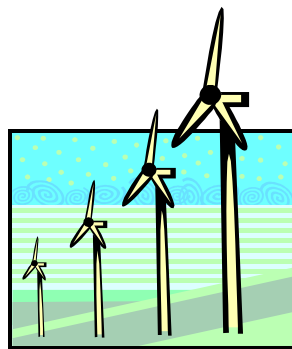


Affordable Warmth Policy



Foreword

Fuel poverty is defined as the ‘ inability of a household to afford adequate warmth¹. It is due to the combined effect of low household income, inadequate and expensive forms of heating and poor insulation standards. In other words it is a combination of low income, cold homes and high fuel bills.

Fuel poverty disproportionately affects specific groups, these are considered to be: -

- the elderly
- older people on low incomes
- lone parents - especially those with young children
- the disabled
- chronically sick
- unemployed people (specifically those under 25 years of age)
- the long term unemployed

The factors that contribute to fuel poverty often reinforce each other, for example a combination of living in poor and cold housing often results in poor health, the adverse effect of cold homes on health is well documented. Recent research carried out on behalf of the Government proves that cold homes are associated with unacceptably high rates of winter mortality, especially amongst the elderly and that respiratory illness (e.g. influenza, pneumonia and bronchitis), heart attacks and strokes are exacerbated by the cold³. Cold, damp conditions are also likely to promote fungi and mould growth, which are often linked with respiratory conditions such as bronchitis and asthma.

Those who suffer the consequences of fuel poverty have a limited choice, either to live in the cold with the related discomforts and health problems, or to heat their homes and get into debt.

A widely accepted target for warmth that is affordable is ‘a single households total fuel costs should not exceed 10% of disposable income⁴. Data from the 1996 English House Condition Survey showed that over 4.3 million households in England could be considered as fuel poor.

Faced with this large-scale problem and so as to ensure that households suffering the highest degree of fuel poverty are dealt with first of all, the Government has established its priorities based on defining people in the following ways⁵:

- Those spending 10 to 15% of income to be in marginal fuel poverty.
- Those spending 15 to 20% of income to be in moderate fuel poverty
- Those spending over 20% of income to be in severe fuel poverty

These definitions are especially important because of the necessity to differentiate between the amount of income actually spent on heating and that needing to be spent. Given the competing pressures on low-income households, many do not spend the amount needed to stay warm.

The symptoms of fuel poverty are low income, poor housing, inadequate heating, poor insulation standards and high fuel costs. Indicators show that there are households within the Borough who experience many of these problems.

2. UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001. para.1.7

3. UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001, para.1.11

4. UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001. para.1.1

Legal Framework

Following the Publication of the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 which laid a statutory duty on Local Government to reduce the use of energy and a significant reduction in Carbon Dioxide emissions, the Government and the Devolved Administrations focused on Fuel Poverty in the Home Energy Conservation Act 2000. In its subsequent Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001 the Government sets out the Objectives and Targets it hopes to attain to end the problem of fuel poverty. In particular they will seek an end to the blight of fuel poverty for vulnerable households by 2010.¹

Policy Statement

Charnwood Borough Council is committed to the eradication of fuel poverty and the provision of Affordable Warmth for its residents, irrespective of tenure by 2010, in line with the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy.

This Policy has been developed to help address the social and health problems caused by fuel poverty in the Borough.

The aims and objectives will be achieved via the Energy Action Plan which is the mechanism for delivering the Council's Corporate Energy response and is referenced throughout the document.

The Affordable Warmth Policy linked to other Corporate key strategy areas such as the Energy Policy, Sustainability Strategy, Action for a Better Charnwood, and Local Agenda 21, will provide a mechanism for not only achieving increased comfort levels, energy savings and reduced fuel costs for low income households, but will ultimately contribute to the wider objectives of sustainable development, economic advancement and an overall improvement in the quality of life for the residents of the Borough of Charnwood.

¹ UK Government Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001.

‘Cold Housing leads directly to hypothermia and may contribute to the excess of winter deaths in older people’

Acheson Report 1998

Vision Statement.

To endeavour to provide affordable, warm, healthy homes irrespective of tenure and contribute to the wider objectives of sustainable development, economic advancement and an overall improvement in the quality of life for the residents of the Borough of Charnwood.

Aims and Objectives.

The need for a variety of different approaches that are appropriate to Charnwood Borough’s diverse areas has been recognised. Further analysis of the borough’s profile of residents will help to ensure that affordable warmth measures are targeted at those groups considered to be in greatest need and suffering the highest levels of fuel poverty as the first priority. In addition, relevant advice and information about grants and other schemes will be widely made available to local people.

3 main Aims:-

Aim 1: Raising energy awareness and providing energy advice	Objectives: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To raise the profile of energy awareness amongst Charnwood Borough Council staff and other organisations throughout the Borough.2. To ensure that all residents of the Borough have access to free and impartial energy advice and information
Aim 2: Public Sector Housing	Objective: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To improve energy efficiency in public sector homes so that they are capable of delivering affordable warmth.
Aim 3: Private Sector Housing	Objective: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To encourage and assist, where possible, residents in the private sector to achieve affordable warmth within their homes.

The Council will deliver the objectives of the Policy via its Energy Action Plan