

3. DECENT, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, HEALTH AND FUEL POVERTY

Poor housing is a significant contributor to poor health and fuel poverty. In 2012, over 2.2 million households were classed as fuel-poor, and the most significant contributor to this is poorly insulated and hard-to-heat homes.

Each year there are around 24,000 excess winter deaths linked to cold homes. People who are vulnerable to health problems linked with cold homes are those with cardiovascular or respiratory conditions, babies and children under the age of five, people aged over 65, people with mental health conditions or disabilities, pregnant women and people on low incomes. The problem is not just associated with typical areas of deprivation – rural homes, particularly those off the gas grid, are often among the coldest. Even for those not in fuel poverty, a well-insulated home will have lower running costs, increasing disposable income levels.

Local authorities are major partners in initiatives to improve the energy performance of housing. They are increasingly working alongside health professionals, in their capacity on Health & Wellbeing boards, to deliver efficiency solutions. National policies and programmes (such as ECO and Green Deal) can support this but local organisation is essential to maximise the benefits from these schemes.

Local authorities can:

- Identify the people most vulnerable to fuel poverty and health issues related to cold homes
- Develop networks and partnerships to support those vulnerable to fuel poverty and cold homes, by sharing information across frontline services (such as primary care, housing, social services, heating engineers and meter installers) and provide a single contact point for health and housing referrals
- Improve the energy efficiency of housing – directly working on council-owned properties, in partnership with Housing Providers
- Set up schemes to attract external funding for energy improvements to housing, particularly within regeneration areas or multi-authority areas
- Provide and promote advice on energy saving in the home and encourage greater uptake of national initiatives

All local authorities have to complete annual Housing Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) reports to demonstrate progress on their measures to significantly improve the energy efficiency of local homes. Your local authority plan can be found on the DECC website.¹

GREATER MANCHESTER COUNCILS – PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVING SOCIAL HOUSING

Northwards Housing, an Arm's Length Management Organisation who manage 13,500 properties on behalf of Manchester City Council, wanted to improve the thermal efficiency of over 1,100 of their homes, lift residents out of fuel poverty and help them be warmer as well as providing a face-lift to brighten up the houses and flats. Oldham Borough Council co-ordinated the GMESH project to attract ERDF, and additional resources were made available through CESP, CERT and ECO funding, to finance a £5.3m programme of improvements including external wall insulation, new boilers and PV panels. Residents were trained in energy awareness to make the most of the new measures. Privately owned homes were also treated, with a combination of funding and loans against the property, provided by Manchester City Council. This was part of a wider strategy to provide energy efficiency improvements to a total of 2,400 hard to treat properties. Northwards have now been awarded the gold SHIFT award (Sustainable Homes Index for Tomorrow).

www.northwardshousing.co.uk/news_publications/inthenews/shift.htm#sthash.4LmL9czN.dpuf

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THE LEEDS STANDARD FOR HOUSING

Leeds City Council will be building 1,000 new council homes to the new Leeds Standard. Focusing on super energy efficient homes, with adaptable space, these set a challenge to the private sector. The council seeks to influence better standards in the private building and rented sector through this approach, with around 70,000 new homes needed in the city by 2028.

Design quality, space standards and energy efficiency standards for the Leeds Standard will exceed those normally expected in new build. It will incorporate Homes for Life principles which enable families to live in the homes with minimal cost adaptations, should their circumstances change. Leeds City Council have started the process of engagement to look at innovative designs that reduce the carbon footprint and deliver a cheaper home to maintain, by using the latest innovation and technology, including SMART meters, solar PV and broadband connection to allow for real-time monitoring of energy consumption.

<http://democracy.leeds.gov.uk/documents/s120944/Leeds%20Standard%20Cover%20Report%20050914.pdf>

FURTHER READING & SUPPORT

Fuel poverty data:

www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2014

Public Health England:

Fuel poverty and cold home-related health problems, September 2014: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355790/Briefing7_Fuel_poverty_health_inequalities.pdf

NICE guidance for Health & Wellbeing Boards:

Excess winter deaths and illnesses associated with cold homes, March 2015: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6

APSE/YES Guide to ECO & Green Deal for Local Authorities, March 2015:

<http://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/what-is-eco-and-green-deal-a-guide-for-local-authorities/what-is-eco-and-green-deal-a-guide-for-local-authorities>

Local Government Association information on carbon reduction in housing:

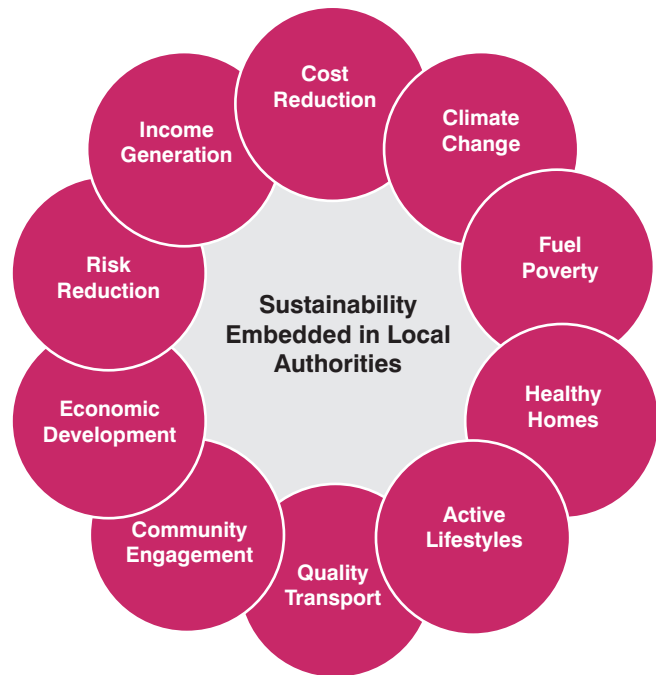
<http://www.local.gov.uk/climate-change>

COST-EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY

Local authorities across the UK and abroad are proving that taking a sustainable approach to their operations and services delivers multiple benefits, such as improved performance, lower costs and better outcomes for their communities.

Climate change or sustainability themes are embedded in national policy and appear in different guises and services areas. Recent changes have threatened to push climate change, carbon reduction and sustainability off the priority list, as authorities handle the cuts agenda, tackle public sector reform and fight to deliver critical services with fewer resources. But actively addressing sustainability in corporate plans supports cost-effective service delivery – it is not just a “nice to have” that can be discarded when budgets are tight.

This series of briefings demonstrates how many local authorities are benefitting from actively considering sustainability in their operations and services:



1. Save Carbon – Save Money	6. Transport Infrastructure
2. Generating Energy and Income	7. Economic Development
3. Decent Affordable Housing, Health & Fuel Poverty	8. Supporting Communities
4. Improving Public Health	9. Reducing Risks
5. Travel Choices	

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