

4. IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH

Many local authorities are integrating public health activities into their wider work, ensuring that mainstream plans and activities all work towards improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities.

Sustainability is a perfect lens through which to focus a positive approach to delivering public health and wellbeing objectives, saving more expensive care needs and treatment. It also enables the community to be involved as part of the solution to health and wellbeing challenges.



A whole-council approach to public health may include:

- Healthy housing – warm & energy efficient, reducing fuel and child poverty
- Access to parks, green space and nature – for recreation, sport, clean air and social activities
- Supporting community projects such as allotments, community gardens and green volunteering – community focus, fresh food, companionship, exercise, green gyms and improved mental health – building social capital
- Active travel – transport infrastructure that enables walking, cycling and use of public transport to improve health, air quality and reduce congestion
- Supporting walking and cycling clubs to encourage and train people to become more active
- Linking commissioning and procurement of 'green' projects to developing skills and employment for local people, especially unemployed young people

WARM HOMES OLDHAM

The Warm Homes Oldham scheme delivers home energy improvements and advice to people at risk of fuel poverty. The project was jointly funded by Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group, Oldham Council and Oldham Housing Investment Partnership, with the aim of generating demonstrable cost savings for the partners involved. The first project of this kind in England, it aimed to lift 1,000 people out of fuel poverty in the first year. Interventions included ECO-funded insulation, new boilers and heating controls, combined with energy efficiency advice and income maximisation. The scheme has found ¾ of those supported will be lifted out of fuel poverty, there were reported improvements in health and wellbeing including mental health and 96% reported that their home was easier to heat.

www.oldham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3386/warm_homes_interim_evaluation_report



BOILER ON PRESCRIPTION

The Housing Provider Gentoo, in partnership with various North East Clinical Commissioning Groups, has initiated a 'Boiler on Prescription' pilot, creating a framework where a GP can prescribe a suite of home improvements, free of charge, to patients who have medical conditions exacerbated by cold, damp homes. The average spend on housing improvements (insulation, double-glazing, energy efficient boiler, draft proofing) is £5,000 while admission to A&E costs £2,500 – the six early pilot households had 63 interactions with the NHS including three emergency admissions in the six months prior to the trial. By improving the housing conditions, not only can money be saved on NHS and social care costs, but residents will feel warmer, happier and will have long-term improved life quality.

www.gentoo.com/news/gentoo-group-launch-boiler-on-prescription-pilot



FURTHER READING & SUPPORT

Health Impacts of Climate Change:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371103/Health_Effects_of_Climate_Change_in_the_UK_2012_V13_with_cover_accessible.pdf
www.wellcome.ac.uk/About-us/Policy/Spotlight-issues/Health-impacts-of-climate-change/Public-health-benefits-of-reducing-emissions/index.htm

Green Spaces:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355792/Briefing8_Green_spaces_health_inequalities.pdf

Warm Homes:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/355790/Briefing7_Fuel_poverty_health_inequalities.pdf

Active Travel:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/256796/Briefing_Obesity_and_active_travel_final.pdf

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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