

REPORT

To: BELLSHILL AND DISTRICT- AREA COMMITTEE		Subject: FUEL POVERTY AND HEALTH INITIATIVE
From: DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT		
Date: 21 MAY 2004	Ref: EPT/18/03a	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Area Committee about an initiative aimed at combating fuel poverty and the ill health symptoms associated with it. This project is being piloted in the Bellshill area.

2. Background

- 2.1 This Initiative is based on some previous awareness raising sessions organised though the Planning and Environment Department and the Social Work Department and sponsored by Transco. The aim of these seminars has been subsequently supported through the North Lanarkshire Partnership's Joint Health Improvement Plan and forms one of the key actions of that Plan.

3. The Initiative

- 3.1 There has been an identified need within North Lanarkshire to provide access to energy awareness and fuel poverty training to a large number of frontline Social Work, Housing and Health Care staff as part of a wider strategy to combat fuel poverty. In order to address this it is intended that Frontline staff will attend briefings (using a successful format based on Transco Seminars, entitled Health Implications of Cold and Damp Housing) and will learn about the consequences of fuel poverty and health. In addition, information will be provided on how referrals may be made to appropriate agency programmes using a fast track system. The pilot project has developed a joint referral mechanism between Social Work, Health Board and the Fuel Advice Unit. This is a unique and innovative approach within the North Lanarkshire area to joint working and will directly address both the poor health record within the area, as well as reducing harmful carbon emissions.
- 3.2 Frontline staff will not be involved in delivering complex fuel efficiency or benefits advice but will become knowledgeable on the key areas and initiate referrals with and on behalf of service users, where appropriate.
- 3.3 While the overall position within Scotland has improved in terms of more adequately insulated and heated homes, there are indications that the message on how to use fuel wisely and avoid ill health is not getting across comprehensively, particularly to the most vulnerable groups. The targeting of Transco Seminars (Health Implications of Cold and Damp Housing) to frontline Social Work and local Health Service staff is in recognition that these groups of staff have frequent interaction with the most vulnerable groups of residents affected by fuel poverty e.g. the elderly, chronically sick, new babies, stroke victims, lone parents etc. It is these vulnerable groups that this proposed initiative aims to target.
- 3.4 Home Support Workers and Health Workers are in a unique position to positively affect the numbers of people who may be affected by fuel poverty. The majority of their work (75%) is

with elderly people who are most likely to be affected by these issues. Generally, they are held in high regard by their service users and are likely to be trusted when suggesting action like referrals, which is not necessarily the case with all other departmental or Council staff groups.

- 3.5 In addition, the majority of Home Support Worker and Health Workers are also North Lanarkshire residents and any benefit that may accrue to them and their family networks in terms of understanding fuel efficiency issues may lead to a further positive impact on North Lanarkshire Council's profile of fuel poverty.
- 3.6 The proposed pilot local energy initiative aims to draw together and co-ordinate the strands of a number of energy programmes which are ideally suited to being linked. These include the following existing programmes within North Lanarkshire:
- Warm Deal Programme providing grants of up to £500 for a range of insulation measures and energy advice to all eligible households.
 - Central Heating Programme providing a grant averaging £2,500 for central heating and insulation will be provided to certain householders over the age of 60 and who do not already have a working central heating system.
 - Priority Services Register provided through fuel suppliers is aimed at those of pensionable age or the disabled or chronically sick or visually impaired or deaf or hearing impaired. Being on the register accesses free services including a free annual gas safety check, regular meter readings, a unique password scheme, special controls and adapters plus several other benefits.
 - Safer Homes Initiative provided through the Economic Development and Planning Department this initiative provides a range of measures for vulnerable residents to improve the safety and security of their home.
- 3.7 This Project has also been successful in attracting funding through the Energy Savings Trust Innovation Programme with a grant of £6888 being awarded to the Project. In addition to this an extra £1000 contribution has been agreed from ScottishPower.

4. Sustainability Implications

- 4.1 The Project itself represents a good example of sustainable development particularly in terms of its contribution to social cohesion, improving community safety and using energy more efficiently.

5. Corporate Considerations

- 5.1 The funding of this Project has been achieved through the existing budgets of the various Department's and organisations contributing to it's success. A grant of approximately £6888 has been secured from the Energy Savings Trust and a contribution of £1000 has been secured from ScottishPower. These funds will be used to support the 5 seminars planned to train frontline staff and will cover the costs of back filling posts and providing food and accommodation for the seminars.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that Committee note the content of this Report.



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(15 May 2004)

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