



# **Brighton & Hove City Council**

## **Brighton & Hove Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2016-2020**

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## Foreword

The 2015 national fuel poverty strategy for England; 'Cutting the cost of keeping warm' is based on the ambition that;

'A home should be warm and comfortable and provide a healthy and welcoming environment that fosters well-being', and that it is 'unacceptable that many people are prevented from achieving such warmth due to the combination of having a low income and living in a home that cannot be heated at reasonable cost'.<sup>1</sup>

Such ambitions also underpin this strategy for the City of Brighton & Hove. During every winter, people in Brighton & Hove suffer from the adverse effects of cold homes. Many subsequent deaths and hospital admissions are preventable with systematic and co-ordinated action. They are not inevitable and, with ever-rising fuel bills, now is the time to act.

This strategy and the objectives contained, outline the risks to vulnerable people of living in a cold home and how these risks can be addressed. It builds on the 2015 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline 'Excess winter deaths and morbidity and the health risks associated with cold homes', with a tailored approach for Brighton & Hove, building on previous work and current established programmes.

This approach requires partnership working across a number of agencies in the city from all sectors. We know which groups are most at risk, which service providers work with them and the types of interventions that can have the greatest impact. The aim of this strategy is to bring together our knowledge and resources to support our residents to live in warm and healthy homes.

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<sup>1</sup> Cutting the cost of keeping warm, A fuel poverty strategy for England, March 2015

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## **1. Executive Summary**

This strategy has been developed in response to the release of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance released in March 2015 entitled 'Excess winter deaths and morbidity and the health risks associated with cold homes'. The guidance provides evidence based recommendations on how to reduce the risk of death and ill health associated with living in a cold home. The health problems associated with cold homes are experienced during 'normal' winter temperatures, not just during extremely cold weather, winter death rates across England increase at temperatures below about 6°C. The NICE guideline recommends that year-round planning and action by multiple sectors is undertaken to reduce these risks. Accordingly, the guideline is aimed at commissioners, managers, housing providers and health, social care and voluntary sector practitioners who deal with vulnerable people who may have health problems caused, or exacerbated, by living in a cold home.

With the NICE guideline as a basis, this strategy has been developed to address the general risks associated with cold homes and fuel poverty, whilst taking into account the local challenges, resources and opportunities in Brighton & Hove. The strategy has been developed based on a partnership approach, acknowledging the knowledge and expertise of local organisations and their networks engaged in day to day support of some of the city's most vulnerable residents. This approach aligns with the ambition for Brighton & Hove to be a 'connected city' and with the priorities in the city's Sustainable Community Strategy, in particular around health and wellbeing and the aim that;

'We will work collaboratively with public, private and voluntary care providers to meet the needs of the population in an innovative, effective and efficient way as possible.'<sup>2</sup>

This strategy presents the national and local context and relevant drivers for action, describes the risks to health from cold homes and outlines how, as a city, we can tackle this issue.

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<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Community Strategy for Brighton & Hove  
<http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/Introduction%20to%20SCS%20doc..pdf>

## **2. Fuel Poverty & Affordable Warmth**

Struggling to affordably heat homes is not a new issue, however the term 'Fuel Poverty' and its distinction from 'poverty' in general began to be more widely acknowledged through the 1980's. The first Fuel Poverty Strategy for the UK, adopted in 2001, set out a way that fuel poverty could be measured. Known as the '10% definition', this indicator considered a household to be fuel poor if it needed to spend more than 10% of its income (measured before housing costs) on fuel to maintain an adequate standard of warmth. For the purpose of this strategy '**Affordable Warmth**' means a household is able to afford to heat their home to the level required for their health and comfort without entering into fuel poverty.

Significant fluctuations in the numbers of fuel poor households through the late 1990's to 2010 made it clear that the 10% indicator was very sensitive to energy prices. High prices were bringing some people who were reasonably well-off but lived in large, inefficient homes into the fuel poverty statistics. There was concern that there was a danger of both underplaying the effectiveness of support schemes and undermining good scheme design, to ensure that the most vulnerable households were targeted.

In response to these concerns, Professor Sir John Hills of the London School of Economics undertook an independent review of fuel poverty, to assess its causes and impacts and to make recommendations on a more effective way of understanding and measuring the problem. Professor Hills made two key recommendations, both of which were adopted by the Government:

- to adopt a new Low Income High Costs indicator of fuel poverty; and
- to adopt a new fuel poverty strategy for tackling the problem.

Consequently fuel poverty in England is measured using the Low Income High Costs indicator, which considers a household to be fuel poor if:

- 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 Costs (LIHC) indicator allows the measurement of not only the extent of the problem (how many fuel poor households there are) but also the depth of the problem (how badly affected each fuel poor household is). It achieves this by taking account of the 'fuel poverty gap', which is a measure of how much more fuel poor households need to spend to keep warm compared to typical households.

The three key elements which affect whether a household is fuel poor or not are:

- Household income
- Fuel bills
- Energy consumption (dependent on the lifestyle of the household and the energy efficiency of the home)

The national fuel poverty strategy for England 'Cutting the cost of keeping warm' showed the characteristics of a typical fuel poor household;

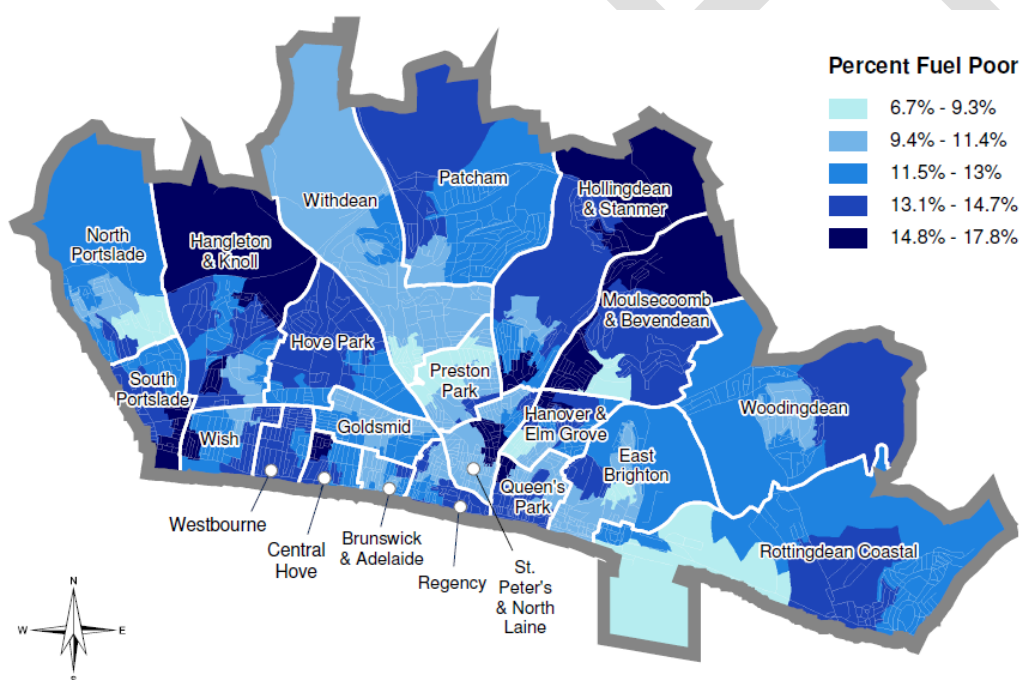
- Mainly families
- Living in larger homes
- Usually private tenure
- Living in older dwellings

It is worth noting however that the characteristics of a fuel poor household can change over time, depending on a number of factors such as fuel prices, changes to household incomes influenced by welfare reform and changes in the housing market. The latest available statistics (for 2013, released in 2015) identified that lone parent households are the most likely to be in fuel poverty (25% of this group), with couples without dependent children (of all ages) and single elderly households the least likely groups to be fuel poor (approximately five per cent of these groups). However, as the age of the oldest person in a household increases, so does the average fuel poverty gap. In 2013, people in England aged 75 or over had the largest average fuel poverty gap, meaning they experience the deepest levels of fuel poverty.

The Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report (2015) estimated that in 2013, 2.35 million households in England were in fuel poverty, representing approximately 10.4% of all households in England. In the South East region fuel poverty was estimated to affect 8.1% of households and in Brighton & Hove the figure was estimated to be 11.9% (14,863 households), higher than both the national and regional averages.

In England, the average fuel poverty gap in 2013 was £374. There are no figures available for the average fuel poverty gap in Brighton & Hove.

The map below shows the estimated distribution of fuel poor households in Brighton & Hove. However, caution should be exercised when viewing fuel poverty statistics relating to a geographical area smaller than local authority (see note below).



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Source: Department of Energy and Climate Change (2015) Sub-regional fuel poverty levels, England, 2013

**Note:** estimates of fuel poverty are robust at local authority level, but are not robust at very low level geographies. Estimates of fuel poverty at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) should be treated with caution. The estimates should only be used to describe general trends and identify areas of particularly high or low fuel poverty. They should not be used to identify trends over time within an LSOA, or to compare LSOA's with similar fuel poverty levels.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Energy & Climate Change, Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report 2015

### **3. Health Impacts of Cold Homes**

Public Health England's 2015 Cold Weather Plan states that winter weather has a direct effect on the incidence of heart attack, stroke, respiratory disease, flu, falls and injuries and hypothermia. Indirect effects include mental health problems such as depression, reduced educational and employment attainment, and the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning if boilers and appliances are poorly maintained or poorly ventilated.

Extreme cold can kill directly through hypothermia, however, this is rare. Diseases of the circulation, such as heart attack and stroke, account for around 40% of excess winter deaths while respiratory illness accounts for approximately one third of the excess deaths. The onset of cold weather leads to an almost immediate increase in weather-related deaths, which can remain raised for up to four weeks. Negative health effects start at relatively moderate outdoor mean temperatures of 4-8°C. Although the risk of death increases as temperatures fall, the higher frequency of days at moderate temperatures in an average winter means the greatest health burden, in absolute numbers of deaths, occurs at more moderate temperatures.

The UK has a relatively high rate of Excess Winter Deaths (EWD), based on international comparisons that use this definition. The EWD Index expresses excess winter deaths as a percentage increase of the expected deaths based on non-winter deaths. Overall, the number of EWD varies between years with an average of around 25,000 in England each winter. The majority of EWD occur in those aged 65+ with 92% of EWD occurring in this age group during 2011-2013 in England and Wales. The Brighton & Hove Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2015 identifies the health risks of cold homes, including winter deaths. For 2008-11 the EWD Index in Brighton & Hove was 20%, equivalent to an average of 135 EWD per year.<sup>4</sup> However, local excess winter mortality is highly variable year on year and shows no clear trend. 'Cutting the cost of keeping warm: A fuel poverty strategy for England' (Department for Energy and Climate Change, March 2015) states:

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<sup>4</sup> Office for National Statistics. Excess Winter Mortality in England and Wales, 2014/15 (Provisional) and 2013/14 (Final); 2015.



‘The link between fuel poverty and health and well-being is recognised and we are committed to developing a means of measuring this. There is no reliable indicator that can be used at this stage. The oft-cited rate of Excess Winter Deaths is not a reliable measure of the success or failure of fuel poverty policy. This is because there are many factors that determine these figures, such as how cold a specific winter is, whether there were any flu epidemics over that winter and how severe they were. Indeed, analysis of the Excess Winter Deaths data for England shows the most recent peak of 29,500 in 2012/13 was immediately followed by 17,000 in 2013/14, the lowest rate on record.’

EWD are almost three times higher in the coldest quarter of housing than in the warmest quarter. According to the World Health Organisation, between 30% and 50% of all EWD are estimated to be attributable to cold indoor temperatures.<sup>5</sup> In the recent past, the rate of EWD in England was twice the rate observed in some colder northern European countries, such as Finland. The NHS is estimated to spend £1.36bn every year treating illnesses caused by cold homes.

The risks of cold homes and the resulting impact on health are recognised by Brighton & Hove City Council and this has been reflected in:

- Excess Winter Deaths and Fuel Poverty Joint Strategic Needs Assessment section
- Director of Public Health Annual Report 2015
- BHCC Housing Strategy 2015

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline makes recommendations on how to reduce the risk of death and ill health associated with living in a cold home. The guideline acknowledges that the health problems associated with cold homes are experienced during 'normal' winter temperatures, not just during extremely cold weather. They propose that year-round planning and action by many sectors is needed to combat these problems. Accordingly, they are aimed at commissioners, managers and health, social care and voluntary sector practitioners who deal with vulnerable people who may have health problems caused, or exacerbated, by living in a cold home.

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<sup>5</sup> World Health Organisation ‘Environmental burden of disease associated with inadequate housing’ – 2011 [http://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/142077/e95004.pdf?ua=1](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/142077/e95004.pdf?ua=1)

The NICE guideline identifies a wide range of people as vulnerable to the cold, including:

- people with cardiovascular conditions
- people with respiratory conditions (in particular, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and childhood asthma)
- people with mental health conditions
- people with disabilities
- older people (65 and older)
- households with young children (from new-born to school age)
- pregnant women
- people on a low income.

The guideline makes recommendations, with the following aims:

- Reduce preventable excess winter death rates
- Improve health and wellbeing among vulnerable groups
- Reduce pressure on health and social care services
- Reduce 'fuel poverty' and the risk of fuel debt or being disconnected from gas and electricity supplies
- Improve the energy efficiency of homes

#### **4. National Policy Context**

The legal framework for tackling fuel poverty in England is laid out in primary legislation through the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 and in secondary legislation, by the Fuel Poverty (England) Regulations 2014.

This set of regulations, which became law on 5 December 2014, gives effect to the new fuel poverty target;

**‘to ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of Band C, by 2030.’**

The regulations also set some interim Milestones:

- (i) as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band E by 2020 and**
- (ii) as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable to Band D by 2025**

#### **Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards**

These regulations that introduce minimum energy efficiency standards on the private rented domestic property sector in England & Wales were approved by both Houses of Parliament in March 2015, as part of the Energy Act 2011.

From April 2018, private landlords will be required by law to ensure their properties meet an energy efficiency rating of at least Band E. From 1 April 2016, tenants living in F and G rated homes will have the right to request energy efficiency improvements which the landlord cannot unreasonably refuse, providing they do not present ‘upfront costs’ to the landlord.

#### **Predicted future need**

Over the next 40 years, global temperatures are set to rise. Even with climate change, however, cold related deaths will continue to represent the biggest weather-related cause of mortality.

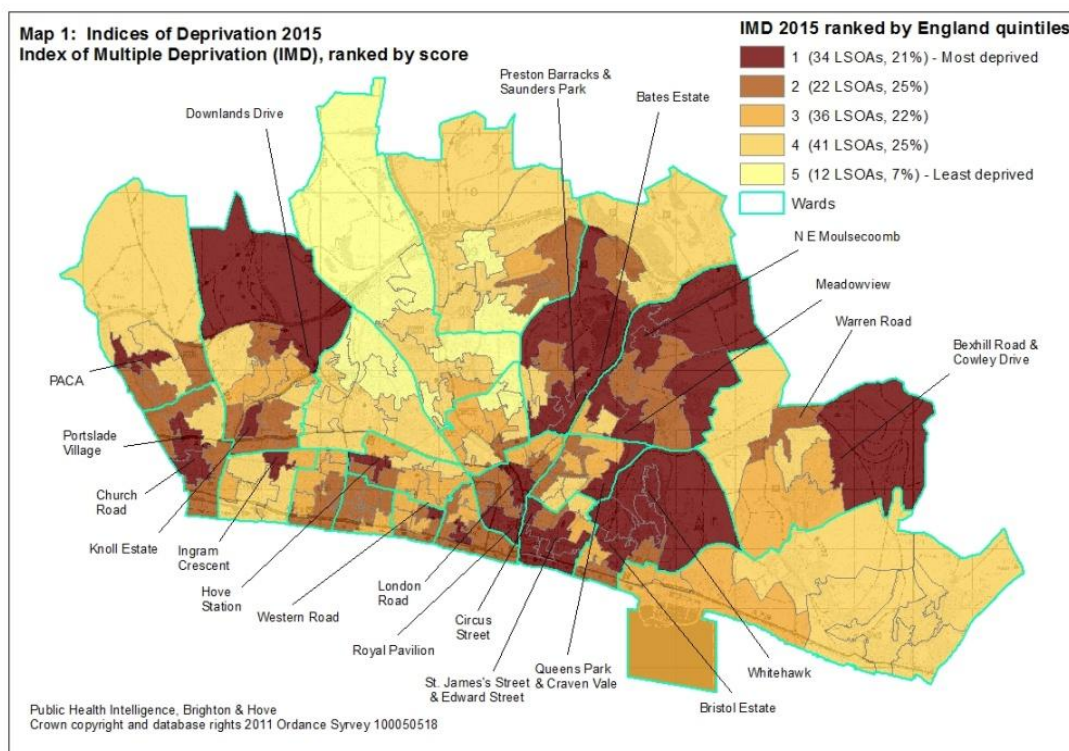
The number of fuel poor households in England is projected to remain broadly flat, increasing to 2.36 million in 2015, before decreasing to 2.34 million in 2016. The average fuel poverty gap is projected to increase to £386 in 2015.

The long-term trend in energy prices is likely to be one of continual increase and rising housing costs represent a constant challenge to the reduction of fuel poverty. Addressing energy inefficient housing and bringing all homes up to a minimum standard of thermal efficiency would have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable households.

## **5. Challenges in Brighton & Hove**

Brighton & Hove is a popular place to live, work and visit, however, it is a place of contrast, with areas of affluence and areas of deprivation, where residents can experience significant inequality compared to the rest of the city in terms of access to suitable housing, employment, health and life expectancy. Pressures from an increasing population, high property prices, pockets of poor quality housing, limited opportunities for new development and the effects of welfare reform are impacting on many families, particularly the most vulnerable people living in the city. The city has one of the highest average house prices outside London, coming within the top 10 local authorities and high rents in the private rented sector making rent unaffordable for many households.

We know from the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015 (IMD 2015) that out of 326 authorities, Brighton & Hove is ranked 102 most deprived authority in England (using the most commonly used summary measure, average score). This means the city is among the third (31%) most deprived authorities in England. Under the IMD at the Lower Super Output Area (small areas of around 1,500 residents / 650 households) level there are 17 neighbourhoods (10%) in Brighton & Hove in the 10% most deprived in England. In total, 34 LSOAs in Brighton & Hove (21%) are in the 20% most deprived areas in England.



In the IMD 'Barriers to housing and services' domain, of 326 local authorities in England, Brighton & Hove is ranked 73 most deprived, meaning that we are ranked just in the second quintile (22%) of most deprived authorities in England for barriers to housing and services. This domain is split into two sub-domains; the 'Geographical sub-domain' and the 'Wider barriers sub-domain'. Whilst the city fairs relatively well in terms of 'geographical barriers' in comparison with other areas the wider barriers sub-domain identifies relatively higher levels of deprivation. Measuring housing affordability, homelessness and household over-crowding, more than two thirds of Brighton & Hove's LSOAs (116, 70%) are in the most deprived 20% for the wider barriers (housing) sub-domain.

Through measuring housing in poor condition and houses without central heating, IMD also compares 'Indoor living environment' of different areas. When combined with outdoor living environment, the IMD shows that of 326 authorities in England, Brighton & Hove is ranked 36 most deprived, meaning we are in the first quintile (11%) of most deprived authorities in England for our living environment.

The Private Sector House Condition Survey 2008 reported that a third of the city's housing stock (up to 37,000 homes) is considered to be non decent. The survey also showed that the age profile of the private stock differs from the average for England in that there is a substantially higher proportion of pre 1919 stock at 39.8% compared to the national average of 24.9%. Overall the stock profile is older than the national picture with 65.7% built before 1945 compared to 43.4% in England as a whole. There are in excess of 30 conservation areas in the city where planning controls are tighter in order to protect its special character. The city is known internationally for its extensive Regency and Victorian architecture and has around 3,400 listed buildings. These factors can consequently impact on the ability of home owners, tenants and landlords to improve the energy efficiency of homes and consequently on residents to live in warm and healthy homes.

The 2011 census showed that the size of the private rented sector in Brighton & Hove has increased by 37% since 2001 with an extra 10,691 homes. Two out of every seven households in the city are now renting from a private landlord, with the city having the 9<sup>th</sup> largest private rented sector in England & Wales, with a total of 34,081 private rented homes. In England (2013), almost 19% of all private rented households are in fuel poverty, compared to 8% of owner occupiers and 10% of social renters.<sup>6</sup>

The 2015 Housing Strategy aims to create 'Decent Warm & Healthy Homes' under the priority of improving housing quality, however the housing stock in Brighton & Hove presents a number of challenges to improving its energy efficiency. The last few years have seen significant changes to the funding available to deliver the objectives outlined in the housing strategy, which means looking at new ways of working to support local people. These changes include the removal of private sector renewal funding that helped owners and landlords improve the quality of their homes. This funding enabled significant numbers of energy efficiency improvements in the housing stock, with a particular focus on our more vulnerable residents.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Energy and Climate Change. Detailed Tables, England 2013, LHC definition; 2015.

## **6. Achievements and opportunities**

Through a number of measures, the city council has worked to improve the quality of homes in the city by increasing energy efficiency and reducing the city's carbon footprint. A number of initiatives have been successful;

**Private Sector Renewal:** From 2009, more than £9m was been invested in enabling over 4,500 homes to be made decent or moved towards decency. This included 2,438 energy efficiency measures installed and 1,592 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved.

Brighton & Hove **Warm Homes, Healthy People Programme:** Since 2011, the Public Health and Housing teams have overseen this annual programme of support to some of the city's most vulnerable residents. Initially funded by bids to the Department of Health totalling £200,000 in 2011 and 2012, the Brighton & Hove Warm Homes, Healthy People Programme is currently funded by the Public Health Directorate. Delivered through a range of partner agencies across the city, this annual programme has to date delivered:

- 33 fuel poverty awareness training sessions to 235 front line workers
- 150 winter home checks to make homes safer and warmer
- 198 home energy advice and assessment visits
- 25 emergency home visits to check welfare and deliver 59 emergency warmth packs
- 215 warm packs to rough sleepers
- 33,500 awareness raising leaflets and 17,500 room thermometers to residents
- 15 community outreach workshops and 2 affordable warmth information events
- 186 emergency winter grants totalling £32,225
- 434 financial inclusion checks

The financial inclusion checks have resulted in a total of £734,415 in confirmed and likely annual income increases for residents – an average of around £1,700 per household.

**Government funding:** £411,000 was secured for energy efficiency improvements to vulnerable householders in the private sector through a joint bid with Eastbourne Borough Council. The Your Warm Home project delivered with partners also funded energy cafes in communities across the city, providing advice to residents about behaviour change and measures they could take to improve the energy efficiency and thermal comfort of their homes. Through Green Deal Pioneer Places, £221,000 was secured for 100 free Green Deal assessments, and retrofits to 10 houses across the city.

**Council housing stock** has achieved 100% decency through an intensive programme of improvements undertaken via a long term partnership between Mears and the council. Energy efficiency of homes has improved and residents heating bills have been cut by replacing boilers and installing insulation such as solid wall, cavity wall, loft and floor. There has also been significant investment in renewable heat and electricity installations.

**Warmth for Wellbeing:** Following a bid to the British Gas Energy Trust's 'Healthy Homes' programme, a local partnership led by Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove was awarded £395,158 to tackle fuel poverty and cold homes in the city. With support from Brighton & Hove City Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group, the grant is funding a package of holistic support throughout 2016 to those most at risk from adverse health effects of cold homes, including personalised money and housing advice and energy efficiency measures.

**Local expertise:** We have two local universities well positioned to support organisations to meet the challenges outlined within this strategy. Through both the University of Brighton Green Growth Platform and Sussex University's Social Policy Research Unit, we have a number of local experts and academics with whom we look to work collaboratively.

There is a vibrant SME sector in the city, working across the sustainability agenda including energy efficiency. There are two energy co-ops based in the city working on projects to increase renewable energy generation, community ownership of energy and energy efficiency. Both Brighton Energy Co-op and Brighton & Hove



Energy Services Co-op have had success in raising and bidding for funding for local projects.

There is an engaged and active community and voluntary sector in the city supporting residents around different vulnerabilities, financial inclusion and housing issues. The city council partners with these organisations wherever possible to ensure the reach of programmes of support to our most vulnerable residents. Our previous work and the input of partners has been reflected throughout this strategy.

**Working with private sector landlords:** Through the Strategic Housing Partnership we are working with landlords through both the Southern Landlords Association and the National Landlords Association to explore ways to improve the energy efficiency of privately rented homes. We are assessing models that can deliver investment that is affordable for both tenants and landlords.

**Your Energy Sussex:** The city council continues to explore options for improving the energy efficiency of the city's housing stock, including exploring different investment opportunities and other funding streams. With this in mind we have worked closely with Your Energy Sussex, a partnership of local authorities, to develop models for energy efficiency, energy generation and supporting residents across the region to reduce their energy bills.

## **7. Objectives of Strategy**

Through working in partnership across the city and the wider area we want to ensure that households, and in particular those considered to be most vulnerable, are able to live in warm homes that support good health and wellbeing.

With consideration of both the NICE guideline referred to in Chapter 3 and the ambitions contained in the national Fuel Poverty Strategy 'Cutting the Cost of Keeping Warm', the objectives below have been drafted based on input and feedback from key partners across the city. In considering what the council and the wider city partnership can do, we need to recognise the challenges all partners face in the context of the current economic climate and welfare reform.

The funding challenges faced by the city council, wider public sector and third sector need to be addressed by making the best use of the resources available across organisations. This strategy comes at a time where the council is required to save £102m over the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 and follows the removal of private sector renewal funding that helped owners and landlords improve the quality of their homes. Recognising the challenges we face, the city council wants to support communities to realise their potential and to create a cultural shift from reliance on traditional support. The partnership approach proposed within this strategy reflects this and the diversity of our city.

Aligned to the recommendations contained within the NICE guideline and our previous experience and learning, this strategy contains a number of objectives to address the causes of fuel poverty and the impacts on residents lives from living in cold homes. In developing the strategy and its objectives, we have taken into account the significant equalities considerations that impact on these issues. These considerations have been identified through the related equalities impact assessment, however it is worth highlighting some specific issues here.

Poor home energy efficiency affects people with low incomes more severely because it affects life chances and how they spend disposable income on other essential items such as food and clothing. Fuel poverty and cold homes can have an even

greater health impact on a range of people, including those with disabilities and long-term health conditions and older people.

The council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to show that we have identified and considered the impact and potential impact of our activities on all people with 'protected characteristics' (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership). Through the strategy and looking forward to future action, we will pay due regard to these duties, including to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by equality groups
- take steps to meet the needs of equality groups
- encourage equality groups to participate in public life or any other activity where participation is disproportionately low, and
- consider if there is a need to treat disabled people differently, including more favourable treatment where necessary.

The council will also look at how we can foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including: tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

The Brighton & Hove Warm Homes Healthy People Programme 2013-14 found that 84% of programme recipients who completed the equalities questionnaire got into debt or cut down on buying essential items in order to heat their home. 51% stated that they or other people in the household had reduced the size of meals or skipped meals in the last six months because there wasn't enough money for food.

In 2013, households in England where the oldest person in the household was aged 16-24 were more likely to be fuel poor. However, people aged 75 or over had the largest average fuel poverty gap, meaning they experience the deepest levels of fuel poverty. Unemployed households in England have the highest rates of fuel poverty across all economic activity groups. Lone parent households have consistently been more likely to be in fuel poverty. However, the depth of fuel poverty is lowest in lone

parent households. People in England (2012) who have a long term illness or disability are more likely to be fuel poor than those who do not.

The objectives below are aimed at supporting all residents in the city struggling to affordably heat their homes, with a specific focus on those most at risk as outlined throughout the strategy. They have also been developed in the context of the wider priorities the council has identified, grounded on delivering the following ambitions;

**A good life:** Ensuring a city for all ages, inclusive of everyone and protecting the most vulnerable.

**A well run city:** Keeping the city safe, clean, moving and connected.

**A vibrant economy:** Promoting a world class economy with a local workforce to match.

**A modern council:** Providing open civic leadership and effective public services.

These objectives and the ambition of the strategy must be considered in light of the challenges faced by the council and the city, reflected more widely across the country, about what councils should be doing and how they should be doing it. The dilemma is that councils and public services more generally cannot continue in the same way, since public spending is reducing, populations growing and costs are rising. These challenges place even greater emphasis on the need for a partnership approach, reflected through the NICE guideline and reflected throughout this strategy.

In light of these challenges, the city council has recognised that by 2020 it will:

- become a **smaller**, more efficient organisation, working as one, with a reduced budget, fewer employees and fewer directly provided services;
- **collaborate** more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions;
- **positively** enable more citizens to play an active role in the creation and provision of services for their local community;
- create a more **connected** council with more shared services, with other providers and other places.

## **Evaluation and Reporting**

Annual updates will be provided to both the Housing and New Homes Committee, and the Health and Wellbeing Board, on the strategy and progress against the objectives outlined below. A more detailed action plan will be developed and monitored in collaboration with partners to track and review progress.

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## **Objective 1**

### **Increase the energy efficiency of the City's housing stock**

#### **What we intend to do**

- 1.1** Support residents to access advice and support to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, including access to local and national funding opportunities
- 1.2** Continued investment into the council's own housing stock through available grant funding and the HRA capital programme in line with the HRA Asset Management Strategy
- 1.3** Work with registered housing providers, private landlords, letting agents and tenants to improve the energy efficiency of homes
- 1.4** Work with private landlords, letting agents and tenants to ensure compliance with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards guiding the energy efficiency of private rented homes
- 1.5** Continue to work with local partners through the Your Energy Sussex partnership to identify models and funding opportunities that enable all householders to make energy efficiency improvements to homes that provide affordable warmth
- 1.6** Through existing schemes and services overseen by the council's Private Sector Housing Team (e.g. Housing Health and Safety Rating System, Houses of Multiple Occupation Standards), work with landlords to ensure quality housing in the private rented sector
- 1.7** Through planning processes, ensure standards in new development supports households to achieve affordable warmth

## **Objective 2**

### **Support residents struggling to pay their energy bills**

#### **What we intend to do**

- 2.1** Support the ongoing development and resourcing of a Single Point of Contact Affordable Warmth Referral System
- 2.2** Support the provision of tailored solutions via the Single Point of Contact Affordable Warmth Referral System for people living in cold homes
- 2.3** Explore effective methods to assess heating needs of those most at risk who use primary health and home care services
- 2.4** Explore opportunities for a switching scheme for Brighton & Hove / local area that involves a process to support and encourage vulnerable residents to access less expensive energy tariffs and methods of paying for energy
- 2.5** Work with local advice agencies to ensure residents have access to advice on housing, benefits, money and energy
- 2.6** Ensure signposting is in place to national and local schemes designed to support people struggling to pay for energy / keep their homes warm
- 2.7** Where resources are available, support programmes of behaviour change across housing tenures aimed to reduce energy bills and keep warm affordably through energy saving advice

### **Objective 3**

#### **Improve awareness and understanding of fuel poverty**

##### **What we intend to do**

- 3.1** Improve communication and promotion to the general public of the health risk of cold homes, to increase awareness of risks and the support available
- 3.2** Train health and social care practitioners to identify and support those residents most at risk from cold homes
- 3.3** Provide easy to understand and accessible information to professionals, front line workers and volunteers to support and refer people in fuel poverty and living in cold homes
- 3.4** Train housing professionals and faith and voluntary sector workers to help people whose homes may be too cold for their health and wellbeing

### **Objective 4**

#### **Work together to tackle fuel poverty through partnership and learning**

##### **What we intend to do**

- 4.1** Establish cross sector Fuel Poverty & Affordable Warmth steering group to deliver related action plan, monitor progress against strategy objectives and coordinate a city wide response.
- 4.2** Build upon existing networks to promote available support to all sectors, relevant organisations and communities across the city
- 4.3** Work alongside community groups to reach isolated individuals and communities across the city
- 4.4** Through the Health & Wellbeing Board and constituent organisations, explore how the objectives and actions related to this strategy can work with and complement other programmes aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of local people
- 4.5** Explore through the Strategic Housing Partnership how the housing sector can work in partnership with health, social care and voluntary sector providers to tackle fuel poverty
- 4.6** Increase understanding of the issue for front line workers across all sectors



through sharing of resources and learning tools, in particular develop an accessible learning tool

## **Objective 5**

### **Increase effective targeting of vulnerable fuel poor households and those most at risk of the health impacts of cold homes**

#### **What we intend to do**

- 5.1** Work with the CCG and NHS partners to identify those groups highlighted in the NICE guideline as most at risk of ill health and morbidity linked to cold homes, exploring potential use of existing patient risk stratification tools and methods
- 5.2** Work with Community and Voluntary Sector organisations to identify and support those groups highlighted in the NICE guideline as most at risk of ill health and morbidity linked to cold homes
- 5.3** Work with social care providers to identify and support those groups highlighted in the NICE guideline as most at risk of ill health and morbidity linked to cold homes
- 5.4** Explore how CCG and local authority commissioning can incorporate relevant NICE recommendations and strategy objectives
- 5.5** Work specifically with teams involved in the discharge of vulnerable people from health or social care settings to ensure they return to a warm home

## **Objective 6**

**To maximise resources and opportunities for tackling the causes fuel poverty**

### **What we intend to do**

- 6.1** Through a partnership approach and city wide steering group, coordinate bids and business cases for additional funding to support work in this area
- 6.2** Working in partnership, coordinate and share resources to ensure assistance is targeted and maximised to the benefit of the most vulnerable residents
- 6.3** Ensure meaningful links to other strategies and work streams across all sectors, coordinating with other financial inclusion / poverty work and wider wellbeing work to maximise opportunities, value for money and impact

## **8. Links to other relevant strategies**

### **2015 Housing Strategy**

The housing strategy aims to create 'Decent Warm & Healthy homes' under the priority of Improving Housing Quality.

### **2015 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Excess winter deaths and fuel poverty**

The JSNA is an ongoing process that provides a comprehensive analysis of current and future needs of local people to inform commissioning of services that will improve outcomes and reduce inequalities. To do this, needs assessments gather together local data, evidence from the public, patients, service users and professionals, plus a review of research and best practice.

### **Financial Inclusion 2013-16**

The strategy defines financial health as "Having enough resources to meet basic needs adequately and to be able to make choices over a prolonged period to maintain physical and mental well being and participate in community and society." It has established a Community Banking Partnership to deliver a number of elements through an integrated seamless service model, including Food & Fuel.

### **Food Poverty Action Plan**

Food is the flexible item in people's budgets; reducing other outgoings helps to free up spend for food. Food and fuel poverty are interlinked.

### **Cold Weather Plan for Brighton & Hove**

### **Sustainable Community Strategy for Brighton & Hove**

### **Health & Wellbeing Strategy (Draft)**

