

ANGUS COUNCIL
FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY

FEBRUARY 2004

Angus Local Housing Strategy 2004-2009
Appendix 4.2

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Angus Council's original HECA report in 1997, detailed the Council's strategy for promoting an increase in domestic energy efficiency and a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, and at the same time acknowledged the importance of making allowance for personal financial circumstances. As the problem of fuel poverty became increasingly recognised, this acknowledgement was condensed into a more focused fuel poverty statement in the 2001 HECA Progress Report.
- 1.2 As the causes and effects of fuel poverty have become more understood, a requirement has emerged for a stand-alone strategy to address the problem. However, whilst this document focuses on fuel poverty, it is important to remember that much of the content has direct links with the HECA strategy, and the two strategies will very much work together. This new document therefore expands on the earlier work done in HECA reports to form the first Angus Council Fuel Poverty Strategy. It draws upon the wealth of recent research into housing, health and poverty at national level, along with the local experience of 6 years energy efficiency work in the domestic housing sector.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Fuel poverty is where a householder cannot heat their home to a comfortable level at a reasonable cost, due to one, or a combination of, three main factors:
- Energy efficiency of the dwelling
 - Household income
 - The cost of fuel
- Under occupation of larger dwellings is also sometimes a contributor.
- 2.2 The Scottish Executive has adopted the following definition:
'A household is in fuel poverty if, in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime, it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use.'
- 2.3 The eradication of fuel poverty has become a priority for national UK Government (which published the UK Fuel Poverty Strategy in 2001), and The Scottish Parliament, which included a statement in The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Under section 89 (5) (B) of the Act, Local Authorities must produce Local Housing Strategies which 'ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that persons do not live in fuel poverty,' by November 2016. There is also a proposed interim milestone target of 30% reduction by 2006.
- 2.4 The effect of poor housing and fuel poverty on peoples' health has been increasingly accepted, and the *Report of the Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health (1998)* specifically recommends improving heating and insulation to help address the problem. A pro-active approach to improve housing and thereby help prevent respiratory illness, can have a substantial impact on health service budgets, and free up valuable resources for tackling other health problems.

3. AIMS

3.1 The overriding goal of Angus Council's fuel poverty strategy is to reduce fuel poverty in Angus as far as is reasonably practical by 2016. To achieve this, the Council has the following aims:

Aim 1: To identify and target vulnerable households most in need of help

Aim 2: To maximise physical measures, allowing Angus householders the opportunity to live in warm and healthy homes, which are energy efficient, and free from condensation and damp

Aim 3: To raise awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues

Aim 4: To provide access to quality energy advice

Aim 5: To maximise income in Angus through advice, education and economic development

Aim 6: To provide access to advice on fuel supply, tariffs and payment methods

4. ORGANISATION, PARTNERSHIP AND POLICY INTEGRATION

4.1 **Angus Council Internal Organisation.** Responsibility for co-ordinating fuel poverty work within Angus Council lies with the Housing Department. The Technical Officer (the lead officer) also manages the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) activities, and is supported by a full time dedicated Home Energy Management Officer, who acts as co-ordinator for the Angus fuel poverty referral network (described in more detail in sections 5 and 6).

4.2 Corporate commitment to fuel poverty and HECA is demonstrated by the level of inter-departmental working in Angus. There is an extensive Local Agenda 21 programme, overseen by the environment strategy group, which is made up of key staff from each department. Domestic energy issues play an important part in this programme, and Housing works closely with colleagues in several departments, the main roles of which are detailed in the table below.

Department	Role
Housing	Manages Fuel Poverty Strategy, HECA Strategy and Local Housing Strategy. Implements energy efficiency measures in council stock, awareness raising, accessing grants, co-ordinating referral network, provides energy and fuel poverty advice, arranges and provides training, distributes compact fluorescent lights (cfl's).
Chief Executive	Manages community plan. Awareness raising, regular consultation with householders (citizens panel) and performance monitoring. Enabling economic development and maximisation of employment opportunity.
Education	Manages energy and fuel poverty issues within school curriculum, and liaises with Housing to arrange specific projects and seminars. Maximises future householders income earning potential through attainment of optimum qualifications. Community Education supporting existing householders through lifelong learning.
Environmental Health & Consumer Protection	Monitors properties below tolerable standard, and liaises on sustainability issues.
Planning & Transport	Manages Local Agenda 21 programme, oversees housing development proposals, and manages home improvement grants.
Property Services	Supervises Council house heating installation programme & liaises on sustainability and energy issues.
Social Work	Provides benefit and debt advice, plays active role in referral network, manages welfare rights and provides child & family support.

Table 1. Angus Council Internal Organisation

4.3 **Partnership.** As no one organisation can combat fuel poverty alone, it is important that resources are maximised through inter-agency partnership working. Angus Council is already working closely with a large number of public, private and voluntary agencies, not only in terms of case referrals, but also in terms of accessing funds, helping with awareness raising, enabling improvements, and giving advice. These are listed below:

Organisation	Input to strategy
Age Concern, Kirriemuir	Awareness raising, referral network & cfl distribution
Angus Care and Repair	Awareness raising, insulation & property improvements, referral network & cfl distribution
Angus Housing Association	Awareness raising, insulation & property improvements, & cfl distribution
Bield Housing Association	Insulation & property improvements, & cfl distribution
Citizens Advice Bureau	Benefit advice & referral network
EAGA	Awareness raising, central heating initiative & warm deal
Energy Action Scotland	Awareness raising, training provision & enabling
Energy Saving Trust	Energy advice, awareness raising and grant funding
Energywatch	Consumer advice
Hillcrest Housing Association	Awareness raising, insulation & property improvements, & cfl distribution
Homestart-Angus	Awareness raising, tenancy support & referral network
Kirkcare Housing Association	Insulation & property improvements, & cfl distribution
Angus Local Health Care Co-operative	Awareness raising, referral network & health liaison, & cfl distribution
Lothian, Borders & Angus Co-op	Awareness raising
N-Power	Provision of cfl's
Safeway	Awareness raising
Scottish and Southern Energy	Provision of EEC funding, Awareness raising and sponsorship
Scottish Power	Provision of EEC funding, Awareness raising and sponsorship
SHON forum	Promotes best practice & joint initiatives
Starter Packs Angus	Tenancy support
Tayside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre	Provides energy and debt advice, & cfl distribution

Table 2. The role of partners

4.4 Crucially, Angus Council works closely with The Local Health Care Co-operative in providing training for health professionals, who then play an important role in the fuel poverty referral network. By utilising the services of trusted intermediaries such as health visitors, help and advice can be given to householders who may normally be reluctant to inter-act with the Council. There are still, however, hard to reach groups, and the Council will look at new ways to expand the partner network, including working with other statutory bodies, religious leaders, and more retail companies, as well investigating the use of innovative promotional methods.

4.5 **Policy integration.** Angus recognises the importance of linking fuel poverty to the wider corporate objectives of tackling inequalities and social exclusion. The Council has 5 key themes, 3 of which reflect these links:

- To promote economic prosperity and promote lifelong learning in Angus
- To Promote healthy, caring and safe communities
- To improve the environment and quality of life in Angus

- 4.6 Fuel poverty is therefore an integral part of other strategic documents, including:
- The Angus Community Plan
 - The Angus Environment Strategy
 - The Angus HECA Strategy
 - The Angus Joint Health Improvement Plan
 - The Angus Local Housing Strategy
- 4.7 **Consultation.** To help formulate this fuel poverty strategy, a wide range of stakeholders have been consulted, in the context of 2 of the above strategies. Workshops were held for both the Local Housing Strategy, and the Joint Health Improvement Plan, where fuel poverty was considered, and suggestions drawn together to help formulate the action plans.

5. IDENTIFYING FUEL POOR HOUSEHOLDS

- 5.1 **Aim 1: To identify and target vulnerable households most in need of help.** A major difficulty with Fuel Poverty is knowing where the problems occur, as information on household income and fuel use (other than generalities) is not in the public domain. Furthermore, out-with the social housing sector, energy efficiency standards of specific properties in Angus, is not known.
- 5.2 The Scottish House Condition Survey (2002) conducted surveys on around 1% of the housing stock in Angus, and by extrapolating the results; this indicated that 11000 Angus households may be fuel poor (22% of households). As there is no more accurate information currently available, this will be used as the baseline figure for the purposes of this strategy.
- 5.3 Angus Council intends to use a range of methods to help more accurately identify fuel poor households, (such as energy and fuel poverty audits, local house condition surveys, the referral network and awareness raising) so that resources can be targeted at those in most need of help. This forms the basis for Aim 1. Research indicates that single parent families and lone pensioners are most at risk of fuel poverty, but the problem, once again, is knowing where they are. As fuel poverty is mobile (as people move), the logical long term goal must be to work through the entire housing stock in a methodical manner, so that wherever a householder moves to in Angus, the property itself is able to provide an energy efficient home which can deliver affordable warmth. This is dealt with in more detail in Sections 6 and 7.

Objective	Target	Lead Agency	Comment
1a Continue fuel poverty referral network, and expand number of participating agencies	100 referrals per annum	Angus Council	Co-ordinated by Home Energy Management Officer
1b Conduct energy audits, and include fuel poverty questions.	500 audits by December 2004	Angus Council	Grant funding to be investigated
1c Conduct local house condition survey & include fuel poverty questions	Spring 2006	Angus Council	Lever-in grant funding & link to Local Housing Strategy
1d Set up fuel poverty database to record identified households and measures taken	Operating by Summer 2004	Angus Council	Names and addresses not to be passed on without permission

1e Use promotional events and awareness raising to enable householders to self refer	Hold 2 community energy & fuel poverty events by Autumn 2004	Angus Council / EST / TEEAC	Work with EST, Health Board and local groups
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Table 3. Objectives of Aim 1

6. ADDRESSING THE CAUSES

- 6.1 Fuel poverty is a complex subject, resulting from a mix of socio-economic and property related reasons, but it is generally agreed that there are three main causes of fuel poverty, the first of which is fixed, whilst the other two are variable: energy efficiency of the dwelling, household income, and the cost of fuel. The size of property in relation to household size (under occupation) can also be a contributory factor.
- 6.2 Fuel poverty is not restricted to certain tenures, but there is anecdotal evidence that some are more prone to it than others, the worst affected being the private rented sector (although this cannot be confirmed as there is no definitive data). Angus Council is investigating the introduction of a voluntary Private Rented Accreditation Scheme, to encourage good housing standards, including energy efficiency, and is already speaking to many of the larger landlords in the area. In Angus there are around 50,000 properties, 18% are Council Owned, 5% are Housing Association owned, 12% are privately rented or tied accommodation, and 65% are owner occupied. The Council has a number of major programmes designed to improve the energy efficiency of its own stock, as do the Housing Associations. It is also relatively easy for the social landlords to keep their tenants informed, and to offer advice and help where necessary - but it is distinctly harder in the private sector. This strategy must therefore include a range of methods to ensure that help is available across Angus, irrespective of tenure.
- 6.3 Angus already operates a fuel poverty referral network, which is available to help any householder. Energy and fuel poverty awareness training has been provided to a range of professionals and voluntary workers who are inter-acting with householders on a daily basis, very often within the home environment. The training enables these 'trusted intermediaries' to recognise the signs of fuel poverty, and to know that they have a single point of contact for finding help for householders. So far there have been 3 rounds of training at which a total of 110 staff have benefited - these include health visitors, midwives, district nurses, occupational therapists, care and repair staff, housing visitors, maintenance staff, social workers, Community Education Development Officers and voluntary workers. The trained staff are provided with a simple checklist which they can use to help them recognise the signs of fuel poverty, and which they can also use as a referral form (see Appendix 3).
- 6.4 The network is co-ordinated by the Home Energy Management Officer in Angus Council, who receives requests for help from these front line staff, and who then can take appropriate action (usually after a home visit). This can take the form of advice on simple improvements to the property, on behavioural changes, on how to get the most out of the heating system, or on fuel tariffs; or householders can be directed to grants or benefit advice, depending on their circumstances. Help can also be given in dealing with fuel debt.
- 6.5 The referral network has been in operation since 2002 and included in early 2003 a specific project, called 'Give your child a warm start', which was designed to help parents maintain a warm safe environment for new born and young children. The project, which was a partnership between Angus Council, Energy Action Scotland, Angus Local Health Care Co-operative and Scottish and Southern Energy,

provided training and tailored information for midwives, health visitors and other professionals dealing specifically with this client group. (See case study 1).

Case Study 1

Background

Young couple with a 10-week old baby and living in private-rented flat. Referred by Health Visitor as experiencing problems using storage heaters and hot water and condensation within their home.

Advice Given

- Using calor gas heater as stated could not afford to run storage heaters; advice given regarding best use of heaters.
- Received very little hot water – due to capacity of tank - but amount received was not hot enough – contacted landlord and asked if he could help.
- Explained about causes of condensation and given advice on how to help stop condensation, in particular the use of calor gas heater
- Qualified for Warm Deal therefore direct referral to Tayside Energy and also informed landlord
- Advice on applications to various Housing Associations – issues with debt

Outcome

Follow-up call confirmed that householder was much warmer and not using as much electricity as had expected.

- 6.6 The network cuts across all of the main causes of fuel poverty, and deals with problems in a holistic manner. There have so far been 120 referrals: the number of households involved may be relatively small, but the benefits to the individual can be great. There are however, other measures, outlined in the next 3 sections, which are more specific to the 3 main causes.

7. ADDRESSING THE CAUSES: ENERGY EFFICIENCY.

- 7.1 The only fuel poverty factor, which is fixed, is the energy efficiency of the dwelling. Logic therefore dictates that if it were possible to upgrade all dwellings to a National Home Energy Rating (NHER) of 10 (on a scale of 1-10), then fuel poverty would be mostly eliminated. However, the nature of the building types and construction methods in the Angus housing stock, mean that this is not possible. Angus Council intends to ensure that all Council housing reaches a minimum NHER of 5 by March 2009, (objective 2d) well ahead of the target set out in the Scottish Social Housing Standard. There are a number of measures, which can be taken, to improve the energy efficiency of the stock to an optimum level, and these are outlined under aims 2, 3 and 4.

- 7.2 **Aim 2: To maximise physical measures, allowing Angus householders the opportunity to live in warm and healthy homes, which are energy efficient,**

and free from condensation and damp. The main tools for improving a dwelling's energy efficiency and reducing condensation, are a combination of effective insulation, efficient heating system and controlled ventilation.

- 7.3 Loft insulation and cavity wall insulation are the most cost effective improvements which can be installed. Some 95% of social housing stock in Angus has loft insulation to 200mm depth - Angus Council is just completing the last of the remaining council owned houses in the loft insulation top-up programme, which has not only brought energy efficiency benefits, but also provided local employment and training opportunities, by accessing 'Warm Deal' money to fund places for unemployed people in the installation teams. There is a similar picture with cavity wall insulation, where the potential for more improvement in the social housing stock is limited (objective 2a). There are, however, some cases where cavity fill has become defective, and Angus Council is investigating the extent of this by conducting thermographic surveys, and then planning remedial measures such as the use of external insulation. There are also a number of non-traditional timber framed houses, which need additional insulation, and the Council is formulating a programme to address this (objective 2b).
- 7.4 In the privately owned stock, it is known that there is still a large potential for increasing loft and cavity insulation, and limited grant funding is available through the Warm Deal (to over 60's and people on benefits) and through the fuel companies (in the form of the energy efficiency commitment - EEC). Angus will promote these grant opportunities to the private sector to maximise the installation of loft and cavity insulation, and will also investigate the wider availability of home improvement grants for this type of work.
- 7.5 Hot water cylinder and pipe insulation has also been completed in social housing, and is also widespread in the private sector. However, there are inevitably cases where pipes have not been lagged, and h.w. cylinders may not have enough insulation, so Angus Council will continue to raise the awareness of this issue.
- 7.6 External Insulation or Insulated Dry Lining can be an effective improvement for properties with solid walls that are not suitable for cavity fill. However, the first is very expensive, and is probably only a practical solution for social landlords who can justify the long pay-back period on the capital outlay. Even here, there are problems with externally insulating flats where there may be owner-occupiers in the block who are unwilling (or financially unable) to take part in the project; and social landlords have to make hard decisions on whether to undertake this costly solution on properties where they are unsure of future demand. Angus Council, does however, consider this to be a reasonable solution in specific cases. The second option is Internal dry lining, which, in addition to being costly, is very disruptive, and is only practical at the time of a complete room by room modernisation.
- 7.7 Furthermore, there is very little funding available for these types of insulation, under current grant schemes, and unless this changes, these measures will be very limited, especially in the private sector. This is unfortunate, as the properties that would most benefit from these measures in Angus, are typically rural solid wall cottages, very often in exposed areas, which are also the same properties that do not benefit from mains gas. The grant regimes must change to recognise the requirements of these rural hard to treat homes.
- 7.8 Efficient Central Heating plays an important part in combating fuel poverty. Angus Council is in the final stage of its programme to upgrade all council houses from partial to full central heating, by March 2007. Where gas is the tenants' choice of heating type, condensing boilers are fitted as standard (although marginally more

costly to buy, they are highly efficient and cheaper to run than standard boilers, so deliver savings to tenants). The current heating contracts also include for local employment benefits in the form of heating installer training places. (Angus Council will also change existing solid fuel central heating in council houses to another type of system, if health advisors can show that the tenant is having difficulty coping because of a health condition – see case study 2.) The Housing Associations in Angus are similarly close to completing their central heating programmes (objective 2c).

Case Study 2

Background

Young couple with 2 week old baby and 2 year old child living in flat – rented from Angus Council. Referred by both Health Visitor and Midwife as whole family extremely cold.

Advice Given

- Not coping with existing solid fuel system
- Inadequate heating from current system
- Baby and daughter being put to bed in excessive clothing / hats etc
- Letter of support from health visitor
- Approached local housing office regarding change of system on medical grounds and re-letting issue – if they moved due to current heating would be taken out and replaced with gas before being re-let

Outcome

This led to a change in Angus Council policy on ‘One-Off’ applications to change heating systems on medical grounds where the existing system was solid fuel – now fuel poverty issues included. Consequently, solid fuel system was replaced with efficient gas central heating

- 7.9 Angus Council actively promotes the Scottish Executive’s Central Heating Initiative, in conjunction with the managing agent, EAGA. This grant provides free central heating systems for private sector householders over 60, where there is no existing form of central heating, along with a free insulation package. The Council will continue to publicise this grant to ensure maximum uptake.
- 7.10 Following guidance in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Angus Council is investigating the possible use of home improvement grant money to assist specific private sector Householders under 60, to install central heating. However, the funding available will inevitably be limited and means tested, and is unlikely to make a huge impact on the extent of central heating across Angus (objective 2e).
- 7.11 Controlled ventilation is the key to reducing condensation, and this entails the removal of unwanted draughts, by installing double-glazing or draught-proofing, along with a convenient means of controlling fresh air intake. All Angus Council properties are now double glazed, as are the majority of Housing Association dwellings, and there are programmes in place to install kitchen and bathroom extract fans. A high proportion of private sector houses also have double-glazing

fitted. However, double glazing seals up the dwelling, and can make condensation problems worse, unless the householder is educated to ventilate the house appropriately, and the means of controlled ventilation is kept simple (avoiding more complicated 'automatic' devices). According to the Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) 2001, there remain around 6000 Angus homes with condensation present, and this can have a detrimental affect on health, as the associated mould growth can lead to increases in dust mite levels, and exacerbate respiratory illness. Angus Council will therefore continue promotional activities to raise awareness of this problem.

- 7.12 Energy efficient lighting is a useful way of reducing electricity costs. Angus Council and Tayside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (TEEAC), co-ordinate the distribution of free compact fluorescent light-bulbs (cfl's) to vulnerable householders across Angus. The bulbs are provided by the fuel companies (Scottish and Southern Energy, and N-Power), as part of the Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC), and are then passed on to partner organisations to give to vulnerable clients, or are handed to appropriate householders at changes of tenancy: the objective being to get as many cfl's into as many houses as possible. Angus Council have to date distributed 11000 free cfl's (objective 2f).

Objective	Target	Lead Agency	Comment
2a complete remaining loft & cavity insulation to social housing stock	March 2006	Angus Council / Housing Associations	
2b Identify and insulate non-traditional timber framed council houses	March 2009	Angus Council	Capital programme to be developed in 2004
2c Complete central heating programme in Council houses	March 2007	Angus Council	
2d Achieve a minimum NHER rating of 5 for all Council Houses	March 2009	Angus Council	Energy Audit programme to be developed
2e Investigate the use of Home Improvement Grants for central heating	March 2005	Angus Council	
2f Distribute 4000 free cfl's	March 2005	Angus Council / TEEAC	Fuel companies to provide under EEC

Table 4. Objectives of Aim 2

- 7.13 **Aim 3: To raise awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues.**
To encourage more widespread installation of the energy efficiency measures outlined above, there has to be a process of raising peoples' awareness of fuel poverty – what causes it, and how to address it: this is especially true in the private sector. To achieve this, Angus is undertaking a range of promotional and educational activity, through training, events and literature.
- 7.14 Further training of front line staff will be provided to raise fuel poverty awareness in the health and social work professions, as well as voluntary agencies. (objective 3a). All housing staff have already been trained, but top-up training will continue on a regular basis.
- 7.15 Regular events will be organised in local venues, where members of the public will be encouraged to visit, to get first hand information from staff from a range of organisations. Two energy and fuel poverty events of this type were held in 2003, at Menmuir and Hillside; The Menmuir event was attended by Angus Council, EST,

and TEEAC, whilst the Hillside event also involved EAGA and Energywatch. Both these led to a number of successful grant applications. The local primary schools also had energy presentations from TEEAC, to run in tandem with the events. Angus Council, EAGA and TEEAC also held a combined presentation in Forfar, with Pete Wishart MP, designed to highlight fuel poverty to community council and voluntary group representatives. It is intended that in future, events will be programmed according to a prioritised approach, outlined in section 11. (objective 3b & 3d).

7.16 Angus Council includes energy and fuel poverty information in a large range of its literature, as well as having leaflets which target specific client groups (eg: 'give your child a warm start' leaflets). An advice leaflet, which has been included in planning and building warrant application packs, is being updated to include current grant and contact details (objective 3e). Simple tips to help combat fuel poverty are also available on bookmarks in Libraries, and on fridge magnets for all Council tenants. There are also plans to include grant information leaflets with the Council Tax mailing, as this has previously proved successful in Angus (objective 3c). The Council is also actively working with manufacturers to simplify heating control instructions, to make it easier for tenants to understand their heating systems, and therefore use them more effectively.

7.17 A number of leaflet deskdrop exercises were carried out in 2003 at the main Angus Council staffed buildings, in conjunction with EST, and TEEAC, and this showed that a large number of staff on lower incomes were able to benefit from the Warm Deal grant. Angus Council and its neighbouring authorities plan to investigate carrying out a similar joint exercise in hospitals across Tayside, to provide information to health staff who come under the Tayside Health Board umbrella (objective 3f).

Objective	Target	Lead Agency	Comment
3a Train 100 more front line professionals	March 2006	Angus Council /Angus LHCC	Various venues to meet local needs
3b Hold 2 community energy days annually	March 2005, then annual	Angus Council / EAGA / TEEAC	Areas prioritised by health deprivation.
3c Promote warm deal and central heating grants using Council Tax mailing	March 2005	Angus Council / EAGA	
3d Organise 2 school events annually	March 2005, then annually	Angus Council / TEEAC	
3e Provide information leaflets with planning & building warrant packs	March 2005	Angus Council	
3f investigate joint exercise with neighbouring L.A's to target health staff across Tayside	March 2005	Angus Council Neighbouring L.A's	Seek support from EST Local Authority Support Programme

Table 5. Objectives of Aim 3

7.18 **Aim 4: To provide access to quality energy advice.**

Energy advice is available in Angus from 2 main sources: from Angus Council, and from The Energy Saving Trust (EST) via their freephone number. The Home Energy Management Officer in Angus Council can provide advice either by phone (via the Council's ACCESS Line), or by home visit (see case study 3) - the latter has proved to be the most effective, but very time consuming (objective 4a & 4b). Angus Council also publicises the EST freephone number, so that members of the

public have an alternative advice source - calls are dealt with by TEEAC (objective 4c).

Case Study 3

Background

Single parent with two children (5 months / 4 years) and expecting third, living in maisonette flat rented from Angus Council. Referred by Health Visitor as spending approximately £30 per week on gas / £10 electric.

Advice Given

- Hot water thermostat set too high and set to come on for 3 hours in the morning and 6.5 hours in afternoon and evening
- Reset the programmer for times tenant needed
- Advised on how to change the programmer should the reset times need to be altered
- Problems with radiators heating when hot water on / heating off and asked Gas Maintenance Section to look into this
- Given low energy lightbulbs to use throughout house

Outcome

Follow-up phone call confirmed that tenant was much happier about the times and running cost was down to between £10-£20 per week for both gas and electric.

7.19 Staff from Angus Council, TEEAC and other relevant partners, are also on hand at promotional events to give advice as appropriate.

Objective	Target	Lead Agency	Comment
4a Continue to provide phone advice via Home Energy Management Officer	On going	Angus Council	
4b provide advice within 100 people's homes annually	March 2005, then annually	Angus Council	
4c Continue to publicise alternative EST freephone advice		EST / TEEAC	

Table 6. Objectives of Aim 4

8. ADDRESSING THE CAUSES: INCOME.

8.1 **Aim 5: To maximise income in Angus, through advice, education and economic development.** As well as promoting physical improvements to houses, it is important that efforts are made to raise incomes to an optimum level, as fuel poverty is, above all, a problem of poor financial circumstance.

- 8.2 Benefits advice is provided to help householders maximise their entitlement. Angus tries to ensure that householders have a choice of where advice is available, so that if they are not comfortable with the Council as an advisor, they can ask independent organisations (objective 5a). They have 3 options:
- Angus Council Welfare Rights – phone helpline available Angus -wide
 - Citizens Advice Bureau – phone call-back service, or office-based at 3 locations
 - Angus Money Advice Project – serves mainly north Angus
- 8.3 Pension Credit advice is also available as a specific provision on the Council's internet and intranet sites, which have an on-line calculator for giving an immediate ready reckoner. The Pension Service (part of the Benefits Agency) also operates an outreach service in Angus, and staff attend workshops in local venues to provide expert advice (objective 5b).
- 8.4 Debt advice including fuel debt, is available from the same 3 agencies described in 8.1, and in addition, fuel debt advice is provided by TEEAC via the EST freephone number (objective 5c).
- 8.5 Angus also has 3 organisations, which provide help and support for vulnerable and first-time householders, such as homeless applicants, who may be at risk of not coping with the strains of managing their own home. This can take the form of advice (including basic financial information) or helping with the provision of household goods, so, whilst there are only marginal benefits in terms of directly raising income, the services provide a stabilising factor in households, which can form the foundation for improving peoples circumstances. They are:
- Angus Council has a number of tenancy support officers who provide advice for new council tenants, homeless applicants and those having problems sustaining their tenancy.
 - Home-start Angus – a voluntary organisation that provides support and practical help for families with young children under stress.
 - Starter Packs Angus – a voluntary organisation that provides basic household goods & essentials, for individuals and families on low income (objective 5d).
- 8.6 Maximising employment opportunities through economic development, is a vital aspect of tackling fuel poverty. A buoyant local economy could result in higher levels of employment, and higher wage levels, and this would inevitably make fuel more affordable to many households. Angus Council has an active economic development section, working to attract business to the area, whilst at the same time providing advice and support for existing businesses. It is also hoped that the dualling of the A92 could improve the economy of the Angus coastal strip, which could have a beneficial effect for fuel poverty, but this is difficult to quantify.
- 8.7 Maximising educational achievement, and qualifications to increase potential for higher income must also be an integral part of the long-term strategy, but this topic is obviously covered in educational strategic documents.

Objective	Target	Lead Agency	Comment
5a Continue to provide choice for accessing general Benefits advice	10,000 enquiries annually	Angus Council CAB	
5b Provide Pension Credit advice to 2,000 callers annually	March 2005, then annually	Angus Council CAB Angus Money	On-line calculator available

		Advice Pension Service	
5c Provide general money and debt advice to 1000 clients annually	March 2005, then annually	Angus Money Advice Project Angus Council CAB	
5d Provide 100 starter packs annually	March 2005	Starter-Packs Angus	
5e Carry out 200 tenancy support visits annually	March 2005	Angus Council	

Table 7. Objectives of Aim 5

9. ADDRESSING THE CAUSES: FUEL PRICE.

- 9.1 **Aim 6: To provide access to advice on fuel supply, tariffs and payment methods.** If the cost of fuel were to reduce, the proportion of a householder's income needed to heat their home would also go down. However, as Angus Council can have little influence on the actual cost of a unit of fuel, it can only, promote ways of paying for the fuel in the most efficient method.
- 9.2 Householders can save money by changing fuel supplier, and advice is provided by Angus Council, TEEAC and CAB, but specific companies cannot be recommended. Information is also available from Energywatch and other national organisations (objective 6a).
- 9.3 Advice on tariffs is similarly available (objective 6b), but there are particular problems facing some Angus householders who are on the 'Total Heating with Total Control' (THTC) tariff (for electric central heating in the old Scottish Hydro-Electric area) with Scottish and Southern. It is not easy to change fuel supplier in these circumstances, as no other supplier has the same tariff and charge-time regime, which means that choice of tariff and supplier is reduced.
- 9.4 Advice on payment methods is provided by all the above organisations, as well as by the Angus Money Advice Project (objective 6c). By combining the best fuel supplier with the best tariff, and paying in the most efficient way, a householder can be helped to find the most cost effective way of buying their fuel.
- 9.5 Choice of heating system type is limited in a rural area such as Angus, because many dwellings cannot access mains gas. Rural householders must choose between electric, oil, solid fuel or containerised gas, which means that fuel costs are generally higher, and in the case of oil, can fluctuate wildly according to the international market. Angus Council is monitoring developments elsewhere to see if it will be possible to facilitate an extension of the mains gas network into more rural settlements, which could help to reduce fuel poverty in those areas (objective 6d).

Objective	Target	Lead Agency	Comment
6a Advise 100 clients on changing fuel supplier annually	March 2005 and then annually	Angus Council TEEAC	No specific fuel company to be recommended
6b Advise 100 clients on tariffs annually	March 2005 and then annually	Angus Council TEEAC	Monitor developments with energy regulator
6c Advise 100 clients on payment methods annually	March 2005 and then annually	Angus Council TEEAC	

6d Investigate potential for enabling extension of the mains gas network	March 2006	Angus Council	Monitor national developments
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Table 8. Objectives of Aim 6

10. RENEWABLE ENERGY TECHNOLOGY

- 10.1 Renewable energy technology can deliver free heat to householders, but at an initially high capital cost, which means that in the private sector at least, if you can afford to have it installed, you are unlikely to be in fuel poverty. That said, the way that new houses are designed can have a major impact on the cost of heating those homes - by incorporating simple sustainable design techniques (such as aspect, solar gain and high insulation levels), designers can reduce the need for heating to a level at which comfort should be affordable for anyone.
- 10.2 In reality, fuel poverty problems in the private sector are not likely to be influenced by renewables. However, the social housing sector has the ability to accept longer pay back periods, and so, to some extent, can bear the high capital cost. Angus Council recently installed solar water heating to 36 of its flats in Arbroath, with 60% funding from the Scottish Executive's SCHRI grant scheme. The south facing flats are in a part of Arbroath, which has a high proportion of single parent and low income families, and the flats themselves have electric central heating, so were particularly suitable for the project. The technology is to be monitored, but figures predict that water heating costs could be reduced by up to 50% for each household. Although this project was treated as a pilot, it is hoped that the technology could be used in other suitable properties where fuel poverty is known to be prevalent.
- 10.3 Angus Council is also investigating the use of small domestic scale wind turbines, which could be installed in areas not suitable for solar water heating. There are also plans to extend the trial of solar pre-heated ventilation, which has already been used in sheltered housing in Montrose.
- 10.4 By piloting the use of these technologies in high profile locations, Angus Council hopes to encourage its use in the private sector, which may help to bring down the unit cost, so that in the long term there may be benefits for lower income householders in that sector as well.

11. PRIORITIES

- 11.1 Although fuel poverty is in many ways people related, they are not fixed like the properties are – so the Council proposes to work logically through each area of Angus in turn, with priorities based on the **Health Deprivation and Disability Index**. Although it is recognised that there are shortcomings with this index, it does provide an independent starting point, which may, however be subject to change as lessons are learned.
- 11.2 Most activity will consist of promotion, awareness raising, and encouragement to take up grants, benefits and so on. The first 3 areas to be targeted (those with the worst deprivation ranking), however, coincide with parts of Angus already identified for re-generation projects, so there is an opportunity to link energy and fuel poverty issues to the physical improvements planned as part of the projects.
- 11.3 It is envisaged that at least 2 - 3 areas will be targeted each year so that the whole of Angus has benefited from this locally tailored activity by 2016.

12. MONITORING

- 12.1 One of the major problems with monitoring fuel poverty is that data on income, household fuel costs and composition, is not readily available at a local level; whilst households can move into or out of fuel poverty, because of changes in circumstances (changes to household occupant composition, or income, or fuel price change).
- 12.2 Angus Council believe that any method of monitoring reductions in the number of fuel poor households, in terms of the occupants, must be kept as simple as possible, otherwise there is a danger that statistics will be both impractical to collate and inaccurate. The Council therefore intend to use a combination of practical measures, which together, should indicate whether the fuel poverty strategy is successfully delivering the intended reductions. These are:
- Citizens panel. Annual question to 1000 householders – ‘Do you find it difficult to afford to heat your home to a reasonable temperature?’ This should provide a simple method of comparing year on year progress, without relying on income and fuel cost data. Although it is recognised that the terms 'afford' and 'reasonable' can mean different things to different people, a reduction in fuel poverty should still nevertheless, be reflected in a higher proportion of respondents answering no, year on year.
 - Audits. The Council plan to undertake a series of energy & fuel poverty audits across all tenures to try to give an average NHER rating for the housing stock, which can then be monitored for improvements over the course of the strategy.
 - Scottish House Condition Survey. As the results of the 2002 Survey are to be used as the baseline figure for this strategy, the Council proposes to use the results of the next survey as a milestone monitoring tool.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 There are many challenges for Angus Council and other Local Authorities, in trying to alleviate fuel poverty; not least, the mobile nature of the problem, the number of households involved, the unreliability of information, and the lack of available resources.
- 13.2 There are also the economic factors at the core of the problem, which are the most difficult aspects to address. If the local (and national) economy were to improve, and employment opportunities and wages were to rise, the ability of households to pay for fuel would also increase. This is why economic activity, and educational achievement, will, in the long term, have such an important part to play - even though it is hard to quantify.
- 13.3 Angus has many rural households, which can be easily affected by fluctuations in the oil price (a major source of heating fuel in the rural area), whilst its location on the exposed North East Coast makes it vulnerable to severe winters. Both these things are out-with the scope of this strategy, but can mean that fuel poverty, and indeed, excess winter deaths, can be far worse in some years than in others.
- 13.4 This document attempts to condense these complex factors into a strategy which is practical and realistic, and which can achieve real results with lasting benefit for real people. It should not be seen as just dealing with statistics - the emphasis therefore, will be on quality of service - not quantity. By carrying out the objectives in this document, Angus Council and its partners can reduce fuel poverty as far as

possible, and hope to ensure that the majority of residents can heat their homes to a reasonable temperature at an affordable cost, and the key to this is for the many organizations listed in this document to work effectively together towards a common goal.

APPENDIX 1: USEFUL CONTACTS AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Angus Council Tel.01307 461460

Housing	John Morrow Technical Officer (En. Conservation) County Buildings Market Street Forfar DD8 3WH	Louise Hutton Home Energy Management Officer. County Buildings Market Street Forfar DD8 3WH
Social Work	George Meechan Welfare Rights Manager Bruce House Wellgate Arbroath DD11 3TS	

Sources of energy, benefits and debt advice: Local.

- **Angus Council – Housing Department**
Louise Hutton
Home Energy Management Officer
County Buildings
Market Street
Forfar
DD8 3WH
Tel: 01307 461460
- **Angus Council – Social Work Department**
Welfare Rights Team
Bruce House
Wellgate
Arbroath
DD11 3TS
Tel: 01241 435099
- **Angus Money Advice Service**
15a Glengate
Kirriemuir
DD8 4HD
Tel: 01575 575800
- **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**
11 Millgate
Arbroath
DD11 1NN
Tel: 01241 439235

175 High Street
FORFAR
DD8 2HH
Tel: 01307 467096

38 Murray Street
MONTROSE
DD10 8LB
Tel: 01674 673263

- **Tayside Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (TEEAC)**
Ridgeway House,
Balgray Place,
Dundee
DD3 8SH
Tel. 0800 512 012

Sources of energy advice: National.

- **Eaga Partnership**
Suite 2
74 Commercial Street
Commercial Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6LX
Tel. 0131 777 2501
www.eaga.co.uk
- **Energy Action Scotland (EAS)**
Suite 4a
Ingram House
227 Ingram Street
Glasgow
G1 1DA
Tel. 0141 226 3064
www.eas.org.uk
- **Energy Saving Trust (EST)**
1H North Victoria Quay
Edinburgh
EH6 6QQ
Tel. 0131 244 7683
www.est.org.uk
- **Energywatch Scotland**
1st Floor
Delta House
50 West Nile Street
Glasgow
G1 2NP
Tel. 0141 204 7255
www.energywatch.org.uk
- **OFGEM**
Regent Court
70 West Regent Street
Glasgow
G2 2QZ
Tel: 0141 331 2678
www.ofgem.gov.uk

Partnership Organisations:

Age Concern –Kirriemuir	Tel: 01575 574208
Angus Care and Repair	Tel: 01307 463232
Angus Housing Association	Tel: 01241 879537
Bield Housing Association	Tel: 0141 270 7200
Hillcrest Housing Association	Tel: 01241 434333
Home-Start Angus	Tel: 01241 431131
Kirkcare Housing Association	Tel: 01307 468319
Angus Local Health Care Co-operative	Tel: 01307 464551
Lothian, Borders & Angus Co-op	Tel: 01307 465909
N-Power	www.npower.com
Safeway	Tel: 01241 870900
Scottish and Southern Energy	www.scottish-southern.co.uk
Scottish Power	www.scottishpower.co.uk
SHON Forum	c/o Energy Action Scotland
	Tel. 0141 226 3064
Starter Packs Angus	Tel: 01241 878588

Useful Websites:

Consumer Links

- www.consumer.gov.uk Consumer advice run by DTI
- www.which.net.uk Which? magazine online
- www.nacab.org.uk National Association of Citizen Advice Bureau
- www.ncc.org.uk General consumer body
- www.scotconsumer.org.uk Consumer body for Scotland
- www.tradingstandards.gov.uk Trading Standards website

General Energy Links

- www.energyoffice.org.uk Centre for Sustainable Energy
- www.savenergy.co.uk Help with energy efficiency
- www.nea.org.uk Campaign for warm homes

Government and Regulatory Links

- www.defra.gov.uk Dept for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- www.dti.gov.uk Dept Trade & Industry
- www.environment-agency.gov.uk Environmental regulator
- www.open.gov.uk Gives links to all Government sites
- www.of.gov.uk The Office of Fair Trading
- www.oftel.gov.uk Telecommunications regulator
- www.ofwat.gov.uk Office of Water Services
- www.sepa.org.uk Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

Other useful links

- www.doh.gov.uk/kwkw/ Dept. of Health website
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk Online health advice from NHS
- www.ukonline.gov.uk website with links to government depts.

Price Comparison Services

- www.buy.co.uk
- www.energylinx.co.uk
- www.moneyexpert.com/energy
- www.saveenergy.co.uk
- www.switchandgive.com/energywatch
- www.theenergyshop.com
- www.ukpower.co.uk
- www.unravelit.com
- www.uswitch.com

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aim 1: To identify and target vulnerable households most in need of help

	OBJECTIVE	TARGET
1 a	Continue fuel poverty referral network, and expand number of participating agencies	100 referrals per annum
1 b	Conduct energy audits, and include fuel poverty questions	500 audits by December 2004
1 c	Conduct Local House Condition Survey and include fuel poverty questions	Spring 2006
1 d	Set up fuel poverty database to record identified households and measures taken	Operating by Summer 2004
1 e	Use promotional events and awareness raising to enable householders to self refer	Hold 2 community energy & fuel poverty events by Autumn 2004

Aim 2: To maximise physical measures, allowing Angus householders the opportunity to live in warm and healthy homes, which are energy efficient, and free from condensation and damp

	OBJECTIVE	TARGET
2 a	complete remaining loft & cavity insulation to social housing stock	March 2006
2 b	Identify and insulate non-traditional timber framed council houses	March 2009
2 c	Complete central heating programme in Council houses	March 2007
2 d	Achieve a minimum NHER rating of 5 for all Council Houses	March 2009
2 e	Investigate the use of Home Improvement Grants for central heating	March 2005
2 f	Distribute 4000 free cfl's	March 2005

Aim 3: To raise awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues

	OBJECTIVE	TARGET
3 a	Train 100 more front line professionals	March 2006
3 b	Hold 2 community energy days annually	March 2005, then annual
3 c	Promote warm deal and central heating grants using Council Tax mailing	March 2005
3 d	Organise 2 school events annually	March 2005, then annually
3 e	Provide information leaflets with planning & building warrant packs	March 2005
3 f	Investigate joint exercise with neighbouring L.A's to target health staff across Tayside	March 2005

Aim 4: To provide access to quality energy advice

	OBJECTIVE	TARGET
4 a	Continue to provide phone advice via Home Energy Management Officer	On going
4 b	Provide advice within 100 people's homes annually	March 2005, then annually
4 c	Continue to publicise alternative EST freephone advice	

Aim 5: To maximise income in Angus through advice, education and economic development

	OBJECTIVE	TARGET
5 a	Continue to provide service choice for accessing general Benefits advice	10,000 enquiries annually
5 b	Provide Pension Credit advice to 2,000 callers annually	March 2005, then annually
5 c	Provide general money and debt advice to 1000 clients annually	March 2005, then annually

Aim 6: To provide access to advice on fuel supply, tariffs and payment methods

	OBJECTIVE	TARGET
6 a	Advise 100 clients on changing fuel supplier annually	March 2005 and then annually
6 b	Advise 100 clients on tariffs annually	March 2005 and then annually
6 c	Advise 100 clients on payment methods annually	March 2005 and then annually
6 d	Investigate potential for enabling extension of the mains gas network	March 2006

