

Affordable Warmth Strategy Development NEA Consultancy

Policy Perspective

The case for affordable warmth has now been recognised on a national policy level. Local implementation can only be achieved through involvement and co-operation of agencies on the ground. In recognition of this, the obligation on Energy Conservation Authorities (ECAs) to report on fuel poverty was established in the *Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000*¹. In November 2001 the government published the UK Fuel Poverty Strategy which sets a target of eradicating fuel poverty in the UK by 2016. The document identifies a number of roles for local authorities in assisting with the delivery of the UK strategy. Local authorities are major landlords, although this role is being reduced as a result of large-scale voluntary transfer of the housing stock to registered social landlords and other housing companies. However, local authorities have an important role to play as major investors of capital in their own stock and also in private sector properties through renewal grants. In England, this capital investment will amount to £2 billion per year over the next three years, one-third of which it is assumed will be invested in energy efficiency improvements.

Local Authorities also have a much wider strategic role under a range of policy initiatives to promote the well-being and quality of life of all their residents. The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy also emphasises the role local authorities have to play in using their links with health authorities, primary care groups, the voluntary sector, tenant and community organisations to identify vulnerable households most in need of assistance. This builds on the Government and the Devolved Administrations strategies for housing, energy, health, poverty and social exclusion and particularly on *A better quality of life – A strategy for sustainable development for the UK*², demonstrating how policies can meet multiple social, economic and environmental objectives thereby contributing to sustainable development.

Affordable Warmth – The NEA model of strategy development

NEA recognises the key role local authorities have to play in co-ordination and delivery of local strategies to eradicate fuel poverty and other strategic objectives at a local level. In recent years, NEA has worked closely in partnership with a number of Local Authorities and other key stakeholders to

¹ The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 requires the Secretary of State for England and the National Assembly for Wales to publish and implement a strategy for reducing fuel poverty and set targets for its implementation. This is in addition to obligations for local authorities set down in the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and subsequent guidance to local authorities in England “Fuel Poverty – A Local Well-Being Issue” which require local authorities to report annually on initiatives taken to tackle fuel poverty.

² A better quality of life – A strategy for sustainable development for the UK – (DETR, May 1999)

develop *affordable warmth strategies* for both single authorities and consortia.

Affordable warmth strategies are designed to meet corporate and community plan objectives in a planned and systematic way. NEA continues to build upon and further develop a range of good practice in the development of affordable warmth strategies and can offer information and advice on the development of strategies as well as a consultancy service for a limited number of authorities as part of the annual work programme.

What are the key benefits of developing an Affordable Warmth Strategy?

- NEA works with Local Authorities and their partners in the community to develop a comprehensive, planned approach to the alleviation of fuel poverty and the provision of affordable warmth.
- This strategic approach allows for co-ordination with wider policy objectives and commitments.
- The strategy development process allows the Local Authority and its partners to determine achievable goals.
- The process provides a focus for action and promotes organisational commitment.
- The process promotes cross-departmental and inter-agency partnership working, both to maximise resources and to allow for the targeting of resources and initiatives where they are most needed.
- The process promotes cross-community participation, co-operation and wider ownership of the strategy.
- The process sets out measurable targets and timescales for action.

What are the key outcomes?

These will be determined in consultation with partners but should include:

- Improvements in heating, insulation and ventilation
- Maximising access to grant aid and assistance
- Promoting access to affordable fuel and tariff options
- Promoting access to financial services and payment methods
- Developing provision of quality energy advice
- Promoting general energy awareness.

The process may have additional outcomes:

- How best to target assistance at the most "vulnerable"
- How to deal with "hard-to-heat homes"
- Improvements in health and well-being
- Can act as a funding magnet

What does NEA bring to the process?

- Over 20 years as lead fuel poverty agency
- National perspective
- 8 years experience of developing Affordable Warmth Strategies
- Technical experience
- Commitment to good practice
- Neutrality
- Policy and practical service development experience

Strategy Development Process Requirements

The Local Authority should be able to provide:

- A demonstrable corporate commitment to the adoption of an affordable warmth strategy
- A named **lead officer** who has a written brief and a time allocation to successfully deliver the project
- A timetable for the strategy development process, leading to committee/cabinet approval as appropriate
- Identification of membership of cross-sectoral membership for **project steering group**. This will require representation from agencies outside the Local Authority. NEA will be able to advise on membership
- Agreement of funding for the programme
- NEA to act as external facilitator

Roles and Responsibilities

NEA: Leads the process
Prepares all paperwork and presentations
Leads workshops and provides guidance for facilitators at workshops
Assists with and provides guidance with drafting strategy material

Lead Officer: Co-ordinates all activity within the authority, with partner organisations and provides secretariat

Steering Group: Lend sectoral ownership and endorsement

Act as advocates for the core aims and objectives of the strategy within own sectors
Advise on integration of strategy with other policy areas and on other practical aspects of the development process
Help drive strategy implementation
Assist with monitoring and review

The Strategy Development Process

1. Initial steps and planning:

- Initial discussion with the authority to establish corporate commitment and timetable for activity. Contacts established for appropriate authority departments and outside agencies. NEA and authority to establish roles and responsibilities of NEA, Lead Officer and Steering Group and to provide a description of the development process. Authority to describe processes for securing adoption of strategy by the authority.
- Establishment of Steering Group. First meeting of Steering Group to explain the process of strategy development, outline roles and responsibilities, plan workshops and identify key participants in workshops.
- Invitations issued to workshop participants.

2. First Workshop (Half-day workshop including buffet lunch)

Likely agenda:

- Welcome and Introduction – NEA/Lead Officer
- Why Affordable Warmth – NEA
- Identification of barriers to Affordable Warmth – group work
- Identification of solutions - group work
- Identification of common themes – NEA and Lead Officer.
- Use common themes to develop broad aims and objectives for an Affordable Warmth Strategy – group work
- Conclusion and explanation of next steps – NEA

3. Interim Process

- NEA to compile and order all information derived from group work at workshops into tabular form, identifying key policy areas, broad aims and objectives and potential partners. NEA to lead on this with support from lead officer.

- Circulate these tables to steering group. Lead Officer to co-ordinate and include any amendments. This to form feedback report on First Workshop.
- Circulate this with invitations to Second Workshop.
- Steering Group Meeting to review Workshop 1 and plan Workshop 2.

4. Second Workshop (Half-day workshop including buffet lunch)

Likely agenda:

- Welcome/Introduction
- Feedback on Workshop 1
- Brief overview of process to date
- Using tables from first workshop, revise and refine aims and objectives - group work (each group will choose one key policy area to work on)
- Break
- Further refine aims and objectives in groups – adding tasks/priorities and lead agencies to the original aims and objectives - group work
- Conclude and outline next steps.

5. Post -Workshop Period

- Steering Group may want to meet to review Workshop 2, identify any problems or further information needs and to have input into decisions about drafting procedures and consultation
- NEA to compile and order all information from Workshop 2 into tabular form
- Lead Officer to use these to compile first draft of Affordable Warmth Strategy
- Lead Officer to circulate to Steering Group for comment
- Lead Officer to co-ordinate amendments and revise the draft
- Lead Officer, supported by NEA, to produce final draft. NEA will provide supporting information for inclusion in text
- Lead Officer to ensure strategy gains approval
- Strategy launch
- Distribution of Strategy Document
- Maximise publicity and promote

All to be completed within 10 -12 weeks of the second workshop. However, the Local Authority may determine an appropriate date to launch the document outside of this period.

Consultancy days and cost

In terms of the process, it is important that an appropriate timetable is drawn up. The **minimum** period from the first steering meeting to launching the strategy is likely to be between **six** and **twelve months**.

NEAs input, amounting to **fourteen consultancy days** throughout the strategy development process, covers the following elements:

1. Initial Steps and Planning:

- Initial meeting with lead officer from the authority
- Assisting the lead officer to establish a steering group
- Meeting with the Steering Group to plan the 1st Workshop
- Preparation time related to all of the above

2. First Workshop:

- 1/2 day workshop session
- Planning for the above

3. Interim:

- Compilation of information and production of workshop report
- Assisting Lead Officer in circulation of the report and inclusion of comments
- Meeting of Steering Group to review process and plan Workshop 2

4. Second Workshop:

- 1/2 day workshop session
- Planning for the above

5. Post-workshop period:

- Meeting of steering group to review workshop 2
- Compilation of Workshop 2 material into tabular form
- NEA to support lead officer in drafting final strategy document and to offer guidance on all aspects of the process

Total consultancy = 14 days

Advice and guidance on delivering an event to launch the strategy and producing a publication can also be provided, but fees *do not* include the costs of a launch event or of production and printing of a strategy document.

Costs

The total cost of NEAs Affordable Warmth Strategy Development is £7,420 plus VAT.

This is based on the above model, constituting 14 days consultancy work and covers the time commitment of the NEA consultant, preparation, development and management costs and related expenses (excluding travel and subsistence).

NEA has considerable expertise and experience in the development of strategies for Affordable Warmth. Local Authorities working with NEA will get the benefit of NEA's combined expertise as well as access to direct consultancy from a senior member of NEA staff.

Further Information

For further information on NEA's Affordable Warmth Strategy development process contact:

Lorraine Donaldson
Operations Manager
NEA
23 Estate Buildings
Railway Street
Huddersfield
HD1 1JY

Tel: 01484 223489
Mob: 07714 294025
E_mail: lorraine.donaldson@nea.org.uk