



haringey strategic partnership

Meeting: Integrated Housing Board

Date: 17 March 2008

Report Title: Report on Fuel Poverty in Haringey

Report of: Phil Harris, Assistant Director, Strategic and Community Housing

Purpose:

The Integrated Housing Board is asked to comment upon the report

Recommendations:

To note the report.

For more information contact:

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Strategic Implications

Fuel poverty is a broad based, multifactorial problem and to successfully tackle it the cooperation of all the strategic partners is necessary. Links to other strategies are mentioned below although it is expected that more will be made in the future.

- **The Housing Strategy** – Increasing the number of households receiving energy efficiency improvements will contribute to the target of improving private sector conditions and delivering decent homes.
- **The Greenest Borough Strategy** – Improved heating and insulation measures result in decreased fuel usage, hence decreased carbon emissions, directly contributing to Priority 3 of the Strategy: Managing Environmental Resources.
- **Sustainable Community Strategy** – The ‘an environmentally sustainable future’ refers to climate change and rising energy costs, and says we will

make homes more energy efficient and reduce carbon emissions, by working with partners to increase home energy efficiency. The 'economic vitality and prosperity shared by all' priority says we'll tackle poverty and promote social inclusion.

- **Council Plan** – the current LAA target is included in the Council Plan and the new LAA Fuel poverty target will be monitored by the IHB.
- **Well-being Strategic Framework** – Under the 'Economic well-being' outcome there are 'reduce fuel poverty' and 'ensure that vulnerable people have decent, energy efficient homes' priorities, with specific actions in the action plan.
- **Life Expectancy Action Plan** – In the 'Housing' section of the plan an energy efficiency action is included, linked to the LAA target. The intro includes useful national policy context and local statistics.
- **Experience Counts** (quality of life for older people strategy) – goal 7, "having a safe, comfortable and well maintained home" – there are specific actions to publicise info on grants available to vulnerable older people to maintain/improve their homes.
- **Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy** – Tackling fuel poverty will contribute to the achievement of improving housing conditions and delivering decent homes
- **The Income Maximisation Strategy** – As many of the grants are means tested it is important that each resident claims the benefits that they are entitled to, as eligibility is determined by the benefits received.

Financial Implications

There are no financial issues arising directly from this report. The Tackling Fuel Poverty project has been funded for the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08 by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and is to be funded from 2008/09 through the new Area Based Grants.

Total funding for 2008/09 has been set at £51,000.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Equalities Implications

Fuel Poverty typically affects the poorest and most vulnerable households, typically those containing people of pensionable age, very young children where there is no adult in full time employment, the disabled and those in receipt of benefits. Much of the assistance and resources will therefore be targeted towards these low income

households, although assistance is also available for those able to pay to improve the energy efficiency of their properties.

Consultation

The proposals contained within the report will be subject to comprehensive consultation with both residents and strategic partners

Background

This paper sets out the national background to fuel poverty, the progress that has been made in Haringey and some suggestions for what needs to be done, with particular regard to stakeholder involvement / engagement to achieve compliance with CAA targets and the objectives of the Greenest Borough Strategy.

Conclusion

This report highlights the strategic importance, for the Council, of tackling Fuel Poverty and highlights the significant range of activities undertaken by the Council to reduce it. It further highlights the number of residents who benefit from grants.

Annex

Integrated Housing Board

Fuel Poverty

Background

A household which spends more than 10% of its income on fuel is deemed to be in fuel poverty. The government is committed to eradicating fuel poverty in vulnerable households by 2010 and throughout England by 2016, as detailed in the UK Fuel Poverty Strategy (2001) and reaffirmed in the Energy White Papers published in 2003 and 2007.

Assistance Available to Residents

Haringey Council is currently assisting residents through the promotion of the following schemes:

Warm Front

- A national scheme, available to those in receipt of means tested or disability related benefits. Provides up to £2700 worth of improvements, which Haringey Council will top up by a further £2000 where necessary.

Here to HELP

- Run by British Gas in conjunction with Haringey Council. Delivers insulation and home security improvements for free to those in receipt of means tested or disability related benefits and at a discount to those able to pay.

Warmth & Comfort

- Run by British Gas across the North London sub region. Delivers heating and insulation improvements to those in receipt of means tested or disability related benefits.

London Mayor's Insulation Scheme

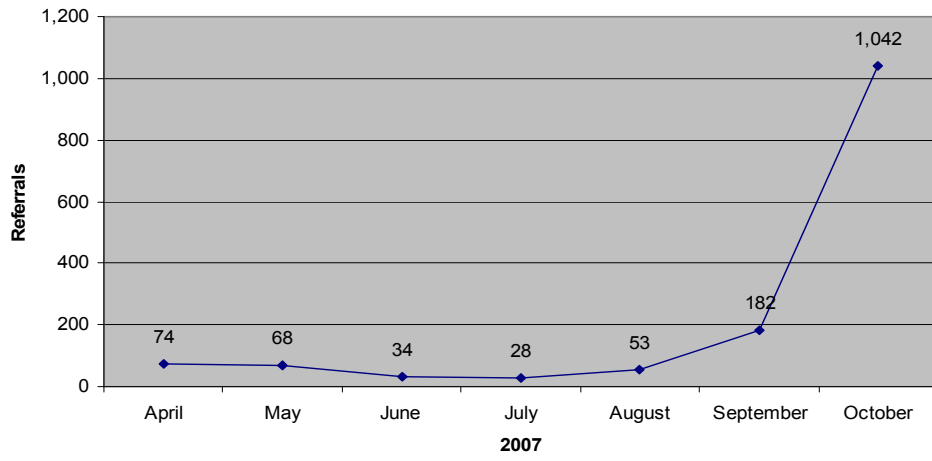
- Provides discounted home insulation (loft and cavity wall) for those not in receipt of means tested benefits. Up to £100 cash back available to residents following installation. Also provides a DIY insulation kit for £49. The best option for those who are able to pay, and hence not eligible for the other schemes.

Current Progress

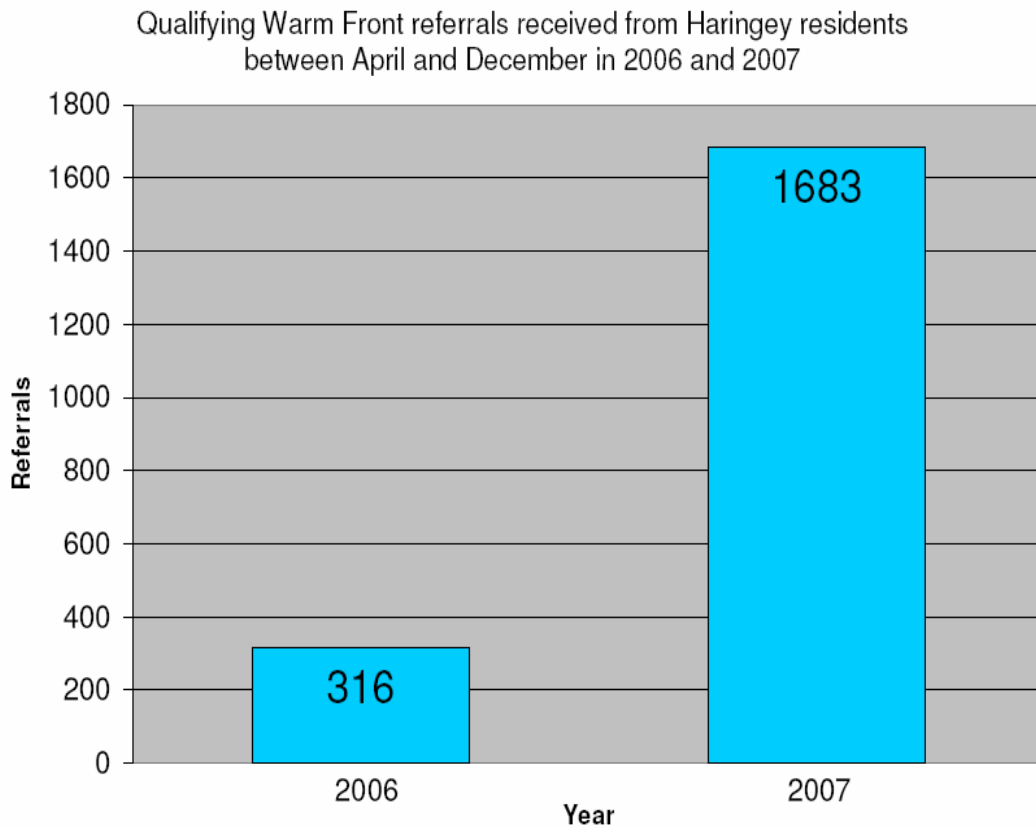
Through the efforts of the Tackling Fuel Poverty project Haringey Council is a leading borough nationally, spearheading the fight against fuel poverty. Notable successes and major achievements include:

- Becoming the first English Council to publish the results of an aerial thermo graphic survey of the borough online
- Developing a suite of web pages (top ranked by Google) providing advice and information for householders on improving the energy efficiency of their properties
- Speaking at the London HECA Forum conference on Haringey Council's activities to tackle fuel poverty
- Conducting, in association with Benefits and Local Taxation and EAGA plc, a mailing of all 30,000 households in the borough in receipt of benefits likely to qualify them for a Warm Front Grant, generating almost 1000 qualifying referrals in the month following the mailing

Qualifying Warm Front Referrals



- We have increased take up of Warm Front grants from a level of 316 between April and December 2006 to 1683 between April and December 2007
- As each Warm Front grant is typically worth £1084.00, this represents an additional £1.5 million worth of improvements to Haringey homes



- The last set of figures available (September 2007) showed that Haringey had exceeded the targets set by Warm Front by 451% and was the best performing London borough.

Current Activities

Current activities to promote take up of the available grants and eradicate fuel poverty within Haringey include:

- Advertisements in Haringey People magazine
- Bill board advertising throughout the borough
- Lamp post banner advertising
- Regular attendance at community events
- Regular attendance at Area Assemblies
- Maintenance and constant addition to the Haringey Council web pages to ensure residents are provided with up to date accurate information
- Regular liaison and training sessions with Call Centre / Switchboard staff to ensure residents are provided with accurate and up to date information when they telephone the Council
- An annual energy efficiency survey of 3000 households in the borough, in order to provide information on the efficiency of Haringey housing and what improvements residents are making to their homes

Warm Wards

- An area based initiative to tackle fuel poverty whereby letters are sent to every resident of a ward detailing the assistance available and how to apply. Residents are also invited to attend a Road Show at which they can meet service providers and receive detailed advice and information.
- By 2016 every ward within the borough will have been targeted

The Local Area Agreement Project

- Haringey Council works together with Haringey Fire Service and Age Concern to reduce carbon emissions and improve the energy efficiency, this project is particularly targeted towards the most vulnerable households.

Decent Homes Surveys

- Every property eligible for a Warm Front grant also receives a comprehensive Decent Homes Assessment and each month the information is emailed to John Mathers from EAGA. The spreadsheets provide information on whether each property has passed or failed and detailed information on the criteria on which it has failed where appropriate. This provides important information and could be used to target private sector grants, should Haringey decide to offer these to residents once more.

Suggested Improvements to Tackling Fuel Poverty within Haringey

Although as previously stated Haringey Council is working hard to tackle fuel poverty, in order to comply with CAA targets, all the strategic partners must become more involved and work together to deliver an even better service.

It is vitally important that the support of the following is secured

The Primary Care Trust

- The Primary Care Trust is involved with many of the most vulnerable members of the community, who most would benefit from improvements to their heating and insulation. By improving the housing conditions of these people many would be able to return home sooner than otherwise, thus relieving the pressure on the PCT.

Older Peoples' Services

- Again many of these clients would benefit, and would be eligible, for the schemes available to improve their heating and insulation

Temporary Accommodation

- Each year the English House Condition Survey shows that those who live in the private rented sector experience the worst housing conditions. We must work together with landlords and tenants to ensure that we do all that we possibly can to improve the quality of temporary accommodation properties.

The Comprehensive Area Assessment will be:

- Relevant to the quality of life of local people
- Area and outcome focused
- Constructive and forward-looking
- Joint and participative

In order to successfully tackle fuel poverty and meet our targets Haringey Council's approach must be the same.