

Fuel Poverty and Health Task Group – Recommendations and Service Area Response

Recommendation	Service Area Comments	Officer Responsible
<p>Recommendation 1 – The task group recommends that Energy Solutions and Brent Council's Voluntary Sector Team work with advice providers in Brent to develop a consistent and co-ordinated fuel debt advice service in Brent.</p>	<p>Beverleigh Forbes - Contracts Manager, Service Development and Commissioning, Housing and Community Care -</p> <p>In 2010 the council awarded Energy Solutions £59,125 from the Main Programme Grant over 3 years to deliver face to face fuel debt, fuel poverty and advice to specific communities in Brent. The advice sessions are delivered to people living in Stonebridge, South Kilburn and Church End. Referrals are received from various community groups dealing with vulnerable people living in these priorities areas. This funding will expire in 2013.</p> <p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>In April 2011 Energy Solutions is due to launch 'Final Demand' its comprehensive fuel debt advice service.</p> <p>Final Demand is a specialised service that covers all aspects of fuel debt and fuel poverty.</p> <p>It will be offered to RSLs, Energy Suppliers, Local Authorities and other organisations that have a vested interest in reducing fuel poverty and fuel debt. It will be provided on a commissioned basis with individual organisations being charge for a pre arranged level of service delivery.</p> <p>Please contact Matthew Sheen at Energy Solutions for more details of this service.</p>	<p>Linda Martin, Head of Service Development and Commissioning and Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions</p>
<p>Recommendation 2 – The task group recommends that Brent Council's Housing Policy Team works with Energy Solutions and local RSLs to help broker an agreement for Energy Solutions to be compensated for providing fuel debt advice for housing association tenants in Brent.</p>	<p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>See Recommendation 1 – Final Demand will be available on a commissioned basis to all RSLs.</p> <p>Tony Hirsch, Housing and Community Care -</p> <p>Policy Team will ensure that the scheme is promoted through regular meetings with RSLs. Work on this can start immediately, although at this stage it is difficult to gauge the likely attitude of RSLs given the financial</p>	<p>Tony Hirsch, Head of Policy and Performance, Housing and Community Care and Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions</p>

	pressures all organisations are facing.	
Recommendation 3 – The task group recommends that officers in the council's Environmental Projects and Policy Team work with Energy Solutions to monitor the emerging funding and policy environment in relation to fuel poverty, so that Brent is able to respond to new funding opportunities if they become available post April 2012.	<p>Jeff Bartley –</p> <p>Energy Solutions will be asked to undertake this work as part of its 2011/12 Service Level Agreement with the Council.</p> <p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions supports this recommendation.</p>	Jeff Bartley, Environmental Projects and Policy Manager and Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions
Recommendation 4 – The task group recommends that the council does not arrange for installation of pre-payment energy meters in its properties or properties used for temporary accommodation and instead refers the tenants and residents that request this service to Energy Solutions for advice on energy efficiency and fuel debt.	<p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions supports this recommendation.</p> <p>In practice many tenants will request pre-payment meters directly from the energy supplier. As a result the council will often be unaware of the installation of these types of meters. We recommend making prospective tenants aware of our advice services prior to moving in so as to further reduce the number of pre-payment meter installs.</p> <p>Tony Hirsch, Housing and Community Care -</p> <p>H&CC will instruct our providers to this effect.</p>	Perry Singh, Assistant Director, Housing Needs/Private Sector Housing
Recommendation 5 – The task group recommends that officers in the council's Environmental Projects and Policy Team works with officers from NHS Brent and North West London NHS Hospitals Trust to resurrect the planned fuel poverty and health campaign and implement this in Brent.	<p>Jeff Bartley –</p> <p>A meeting has been arranged on 31st March 2011 with John Palmer of Northwick Park hospital in order to discuss the way forward.</p> <p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions supports this initiative particularly in relation to patients being discharged from hospital back into to housing conditions with a poor level of thermal comfort.</p>	Jeff Bartley, Environmental Projects and Policy Manager, John Palmer, Sustainability Manager, North West London Hospitals NHS Trust and Simon Bowen, NHS Brent
Recommendation 6 – The task group recommends that the council continues to require landlords to provide properties with at least a D rating under the Energy Performance Certificate system before it is used for temporary accommodation or housing for people placed by the council.	<p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions supports this as the very minimum requirement.</p> <p>Opportunities exist, (e.g. grants, CERT funding, tax relief etc) for landlords to improve the energy efficiency and thermal comfort of their properties. There is poor uptake of these initiatives in the private</p>	Perry Singh, Assistant Director, Housing Needs/Private Sector Housing

<p>This standard should be enforced even if pressure on private sector properties increases as a result of changes to housing benefit rules, and if the council needs to use properties outside of Brent to place people.</p>	<p>rented sector. This in part can be attributed to a lack of awareness by landlords of what is available either directly to themselves or through their tenants. With the advent of the government's Green Deal programme an additional cost effective mechanism will exist for improving the energy efficiency of properties.</p> <p>We recommend that a system be developed that ensures all landlords have at the very minimum gone through a formal process of being made aware of and investigating the opportunities that exist to them for improving their properties.</p> <p>Tony Hirsch, Housing and Community Care -</p> <p>All current temporary accommodation meets this standard. However, the scope of the changes to the Housing Benefit system are such that there is very real uncertainty that the Council will be able to meet its statutory obligations to accommodate homeless families in coming years. In this context it may not be prudent to place a further constraint on procurement activities. We will take all reasonable steps to comply with this recommendation, but cannot provide an absolute guarantee in all instances that we will be able to meet this standard.</p>	
<p>Recommendation 7 – The task group recommends that Brent Private Tenants Rights Group presents the findings from its mystery shopping of landlords to the appropriate overview and scrutiny committee to see if the council should be taking additional action as a result of this work.</p>		<p>Jacky Peacock, Brent Private Tenants Rights Group</p>
<p>Recommendation 8 – The task group recommends that NHS Brent and GPs work to include a question on fuel poverty in their screening of over 75s, to help track the extent of the problem and to refer them to appropriate advice. This could be done on a trial basis and if successful rolled out across the borough.</p>	<p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions supports this recommendation however we would like to be consulted on the format of the question/s.</p> <p>Energy Solutions has a great deal of experiencing assessing fuel poverty in the over 75s and understands the types and format of questions that need to be asked to enable an accurate needs assessment to be made.</p>	<p>Jo Ohlson / GP Commissioners, NHS Brent</p>
<p>Recommendation 9 – The task group recommends that staff</p>	<p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p>	<p>Jo Ohlson, NHS Brent, John</p>

from NHS Brent and North West London NHS Hospitals Trust work with Energy Solutions, supported by the council, to develop an appropriate referral pathway for patients who are suspected of being in fuel poverty. The referral pathway should involve as wide a range of organisations as possible and could build on the Hot Spots scheme that already exists in Brent. Energy Solutions should be appropriately funded by the NHS for facilitating a referral network.	<p>Energy Solutions supports this recommendation and would advise building on the existing framework.</p> <p>North West London NHS Hospitals Trust has set up an exploratory meeting with Energy Solutions to take this recommendation forward.</p>	Palmer, North West London Hospitals NHS Trust and Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions
Recommendation 10 – The task group recommends that North West London NHS Hospitals Trust investigates the possibility of running fuel poverty advice sessions with Energy Solutions at their respiratory clinics. Energy Solutions should be funded to carry out this work.	<p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions supports this recommendation and would be happy to provide such a service.</p> <p>See Recommendation 1 – Final Demand</p>	John Palmer, North West London Hospitals NHS Trust
Recommendation 11 – The task group recommends that Brent Council, with partners, develop an affordable warmth strategy for Brent to enable the borough to develop a coherent and focussed plan to tackle fuel poverty within existing resources.	<p>Jeff Bartley –</p> <p>A meeting is to be arranged between Tony Hirsch and Jeff Bartley to consider this recommendation.</p> <p>Tony Hirsch, Housing and Community Care -</p> <p>The existing Fuel Poverty Strategy is out of date and should be replaced.</p> <p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions in partnership with Brent developed the borough's previous fuel poverty strategy in 2004. We have been advocating the need for an updated strategy and could assist Brent in developing one.</p>	Tony Hirsch, Head of Policy and Performance, Housing and Community Care and Jeff Bartley, Environmental Projects and Policy Manager
Recommendation 12 – The task group recommends that Brent Council considers the feasibility of undertaking a stock condition survey in order to produce a more accurate picture of fuel poverty in the borough and a basis from which to chart measures put in place to tackle it.	<p>Matt Sheen, Energy Solutions –</p> <p>Energy Solutions supports this recommendation and would welcome the opportunity to put forward a proposal to achieve this.</p> <p>Tony Hirsch, Housing and Community Care -</p> <p>The principal difficulty here is with cost. An updated survey would be desirable for a</p>	Tony Hirsch, Head of Policy and Performance, Housing and Community Care

	number of reasons, not only connected with fuel poverty, but is likely to cost in the region of £50,000 for a standard survey. It is suggested that other avenues might be explored to assess whether existing data can provide a reliable proxy for a survey so that the cost of alternatives can be compared.	
Recommendation 13 – The task group recommends that Brent's Local Strategic Partnership hosts a fuel poverty event to begin to address the wider issues outlined in this report and to promote the partnership approach involving the council, NHS and voluntary sector to bring more people out of fuel poverty.	Joanna McCormick - The LSP Advisory Leads Group will look at the best way to deliver a fuel poverty event this year.	Joanna McCormick, Partnerships Coordinator