



Waltham Forest Fuel Poverty Strategy 2020-2025



Councillor Louise Mitchell, Portfolio Lead Member - Housing and Homelessness Prevention

Every Waltham Forest resident deserves a home that is safe and warm. It's unacceptable that in 2020 people are struggling to heat their home and that families are forced to choose between heating their home and buying food.

Not only are people having to live in cold and uncomfortable conditions, we also know that fuel poverty is a major cause of health inequality, with ensuing health issues ranging from poor mental health, childhood asthma and preventable winter deaths. Yet this problem does not receive the attention it deserves.

We want to raise the profile of this issue and make sure people understand the considerable impact that fuel poverty can have and what we will do to tackle it.

Tackling fuel poverty can have far-reaching benefits, from reducing health risks and relieving pressure on health services, to cutting carbon emissions, contributing to our fight to tackle the climate emergency.

Our new strategy sets out what we will do over the next five years to ensure that all residents in Waltham Forest have a warm place to call home. I'm confident it can make a real difference to the lives of many of our residents.



Councillor Clyde Loakes, Deputy Leader and Member for Environment

Improving domestic energy efficiency is one of the most effective ways to tackle fuel poverty. It's shocking that the average annual fuel bill is three times higher for those living in the least efficient homes in comparison to those in the most efficient homes (Band A-C).

Our residents are spending their hard-earned money heating inefficient homes that retain heat so poorly, or simply can't afford to do so and go without.

Not only does improving domestic energy efficiency help reduce fuel poverty, it also helps tackle the Climate Emergency by reducing domestic carbon emissions, which account for 51 per cent of the borough's total carbon emissions.

This is why we are prioritising domestic energy efficiency in both our fuel poverty strategy and our Climate Emergency Strategy, which will be published in 2020.

One of the big challenges for us as a borough is the lack of funding available for domestic retrofit projects. The short-term, stop-start nature of funding schemes makes it difficult to develop

sustainable support mechanisms needed if we are to tackle fuel poverty in the long term. These funding schemes often require organisations to contribute considerable match funding which can be prohibitive for many.

The National Energy Action charity (NEA) estimates the government will need to spend an extra £15.8bn to bridge the gap between the current standards and its fuel poverty targets for 2030.

With growing attention on the pressing issue of the Climate Emergency and the impact of domestic emissions, we hope that more funding will be made available for projects that both decrease carbon emissions and provide affordable warmth for residents.

In the meantime, our strategy aims to ensure that we leverage as much funding as possible, focusing on reducing energy loss and installing renewable energy measures to support fuel poor households in Waltham Forest, whilst helping to tackle the Climate Emergency.

Executive summary

Ensuring decent housing for all our residents will be a key part of Waltham Forest's developing 2030 Vision. A home should be warm, comfortable and affordable, providing a healthy environment that encourages good health and well-being.

When a household is unable to keep their home heated to an adequate temperature, they are said to be in fuel poverty. This is often the result of a combination of low income, high fuel prices and poor energy efficiency.

Fuel poverty is a considerable issue in Waltham Forest, with 14.6 per cent of residents living in fuel poverty. Living in a cold home negatively impacts the occupant's physical and mental health and wellbeing and can lead to cold-related ill-health and excess winter deaths.

Over recent years, Waltham Forest Council has been working to tackle fuel poverty in the borough. Since 2018 we have successfully bid for nearly £600,000 funding towards projects delivering gas connections and central heating to 200 fuel poor households as well as training and advice in health and housing issues.

We have also continued to fund a fuel poverty provider contract, currently held with a local charity, which provides advice and outreach services to help reduce fuel bills and maximise income, as well as practical home improvement work to increase energy efficiency. During 2017-2019, more than 250 fuel poor residents have been supported to reduce their fuel bills, enabling them to better heat their homes.

This fuel poverty strategy brings together the success of our recent work with a new partnership approach to ensure that all sectors are working together to tackle fuel poverty effectively. The strategy reflects the objective of the Council's Housing Strategy 2019 – 2024 to ensure decent, safe and healthy homes and contributes to the Council's ongoing work to reduce carbon emissions. One of our key objectives is to increase domestic energy efficiency which has been highlighted by the Waltham Forest Climate Emergency Commission as one of the key ways in which the borough can tackle the Climate Emergency.

Key objectives of the Waltham Forest Fuel Poverty Strategy 2020 - 2025:

- To reduce the number of borough residents that are in fuel poverty, targeting those with the highest fuel poverty gap
- To improve our processes for identifying residents who are in fuel poverty or at risk of ill-health due to a cold home
- To increase the number of homes in Waltham Forest with domestic energy efficiency ratings of C or above

Our action plan outlines the work we will do over the next five years, in partnership with teams across the Council as well as external organisations, to help us achieve our three key objectives. This will include accessing more funding, raising awareness, collaborating with existing services and providing training to help people identify fuel poverty and make referrals for support.

What is fuel poverty?

According to the Government's definition, a household is in fuel poverty if:

- Its required fuel costs are above average (the national median level), and
- If, after spending that amount its remaining income would put them below the official poverty line.

In practice, we recognise that some households do not meet these criteria but may still struggle to keep their home warm. Our strategy aims to support households in Waltham Forest that cannot afford to heat their home to an adequate temperature.

The extent to which a household is fuel poor is measured using the fuel poverty gap – this is the difference between the household's average energy bill and what their bill would need to be for them to no longer be in fuel poverty. The average fuel poverty gap in England (2017) is £321¹.

When faced with fuel poverty, households tend to respond in one of three ways:

- They use less energy than they need, resulting in colder than average indoor temperatures and an increased risk of cold-related ill health
- They get behind on their fuel bills or borrow money and fall into debt
- They try to meet their energy needs by rationing other essential items such as food (referred to as 'eat or heat' dilemma)



What causes fuel poverty?

Residents tend to be in fuel poverty as a result of one or more of the following three key drivers:

Low income

The average income of a fuel poor household is £10,325, less than half of the average income in the UK².

Households on a lower income are more likely to experience fuel poverty as they are required to spend a higher proportion of their income on keeping their home warm.

High fuel prices

When national fuel prices go up, households are required to spend a higher proportion of their income on heating. Fuel price rises push more people into fuel poverty and increase the fuel poverty gap of those households that are already fuel poor.

The price a household pays for fuel can also vary based on how the energy supplier sets its tariffs and how households pay their bills. Like phone contracts, different energy tariffs offer different benefits to the customer, for example a fixed tariff sets the energy price for a fixed period, whilst a standard tariff can vary.

Households tend to pay higher prices when paying by cash or cheque on receipt of a bill than those paying by direct debit.

Poor energy efficiency

The cost of heating a home can differ greatly depending on its energy efficiency. When a home is very inefficient, it costs a lot to keep it heated to a comfortable temperature as energy is wasted, normally due to an inefficient heating system or lack of insulation³.

The energy efficiency of a home is measured by a SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating, numbered from 0 (low efficiency) – 100 (high efficiency) and banded from A-G. The SAP rating is shown on an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), which also includes estimated costs for heating the home and recommended measures for improving the home's energy efficiency.

All homes let or sold since 2008 must have an EPC, which remains valid for 10 years.

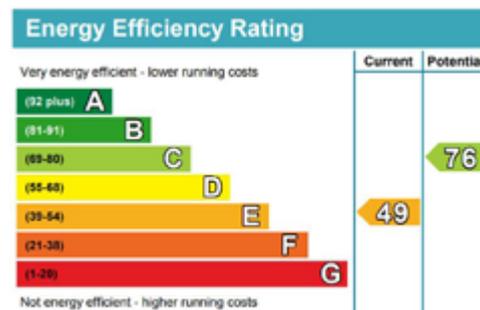
Average annual fuel costs for the least efficient properties (Band G) were three times higher (£2,861) than costs for the most efficient properties (£939) (Band A-C) in 2017 in England⁴.

Households living in homes with poor energy efficiency will spend more on fuel to keep their home adequately heated and are more likely to be fuel poor.

Household behaviours

As well as these three key drivers, inefficient use of energy through particular behaviours can also increase fuel bills and increase the risk of fuel poverty. Examples include:

- Having the heating on whilst nobody is at home
- Keeping windows open when the heating is on
- Leaving household appliances on when they are not being used

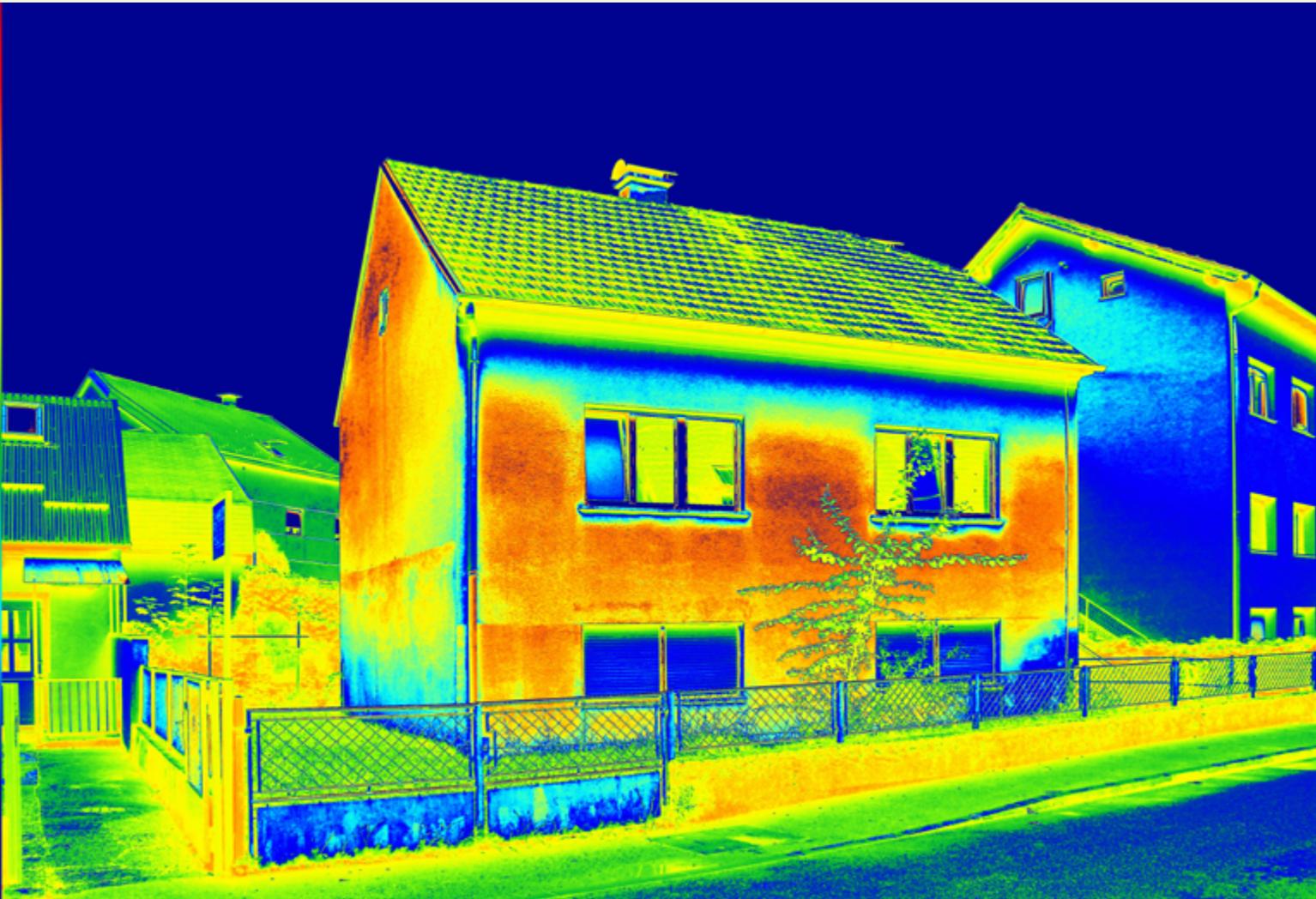
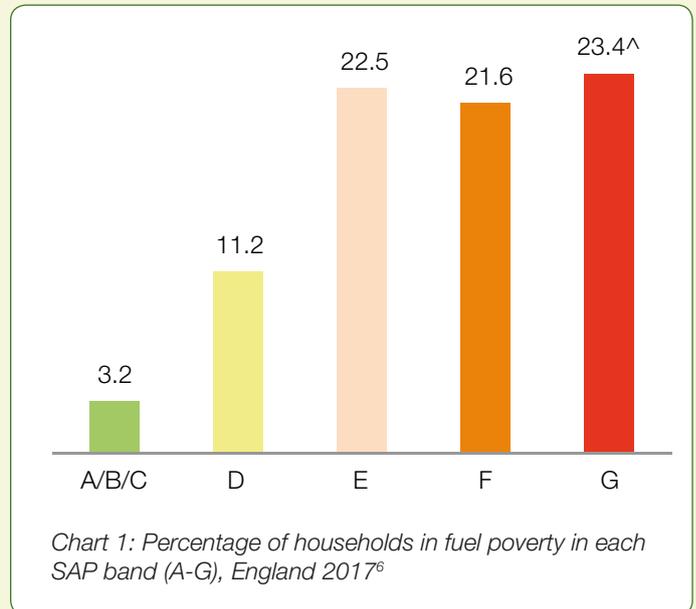


Who is affected by fuel poverty?

People on a low income and/or with high living costs are most affected by fuel poverty. Fuel poverty tends to be more common within the following groups:

- Older people
- People who are unemployed
- Single parent families
- People with disabilities or long term health conditions
- People living in homes that have low SAP ratings

In England, 91 per cent of all fuel poor households have a SAP rating of D or lower. ⁵23.4 per cent of households that live in a G rated property are fuel poor compared with 3.2 per cent of people living in a property with an EPC rated A-C⁶, demonstrating that those living in homes with poor energy efficiency are more likely to be fuel poor as a result.



What is the impact of fuel poverty on a household?

Cold homes can put people at higher risk of cold-related illness and affect a person's mental and physical health and wellbeing. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that indoor temperatures are kept at 21°C in living rooms and 18°C in bedrooms for at least nine hours a day, to prevent cold-related ill health⁷.

The physical effects of cold indoor temperatures increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes due to a rise in blood pressure and can cause or worsen respiratory illnesses. Cold indoor temperatures can worsen arthritic and rheumatic conditions, and lead to increased falls and increased cases of influenza.

Older people and people with disabilities and health conditions are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a cold home. People suffering from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) are four times more likely to be admitted into hospital for respiratory complications during the winter months⁸.

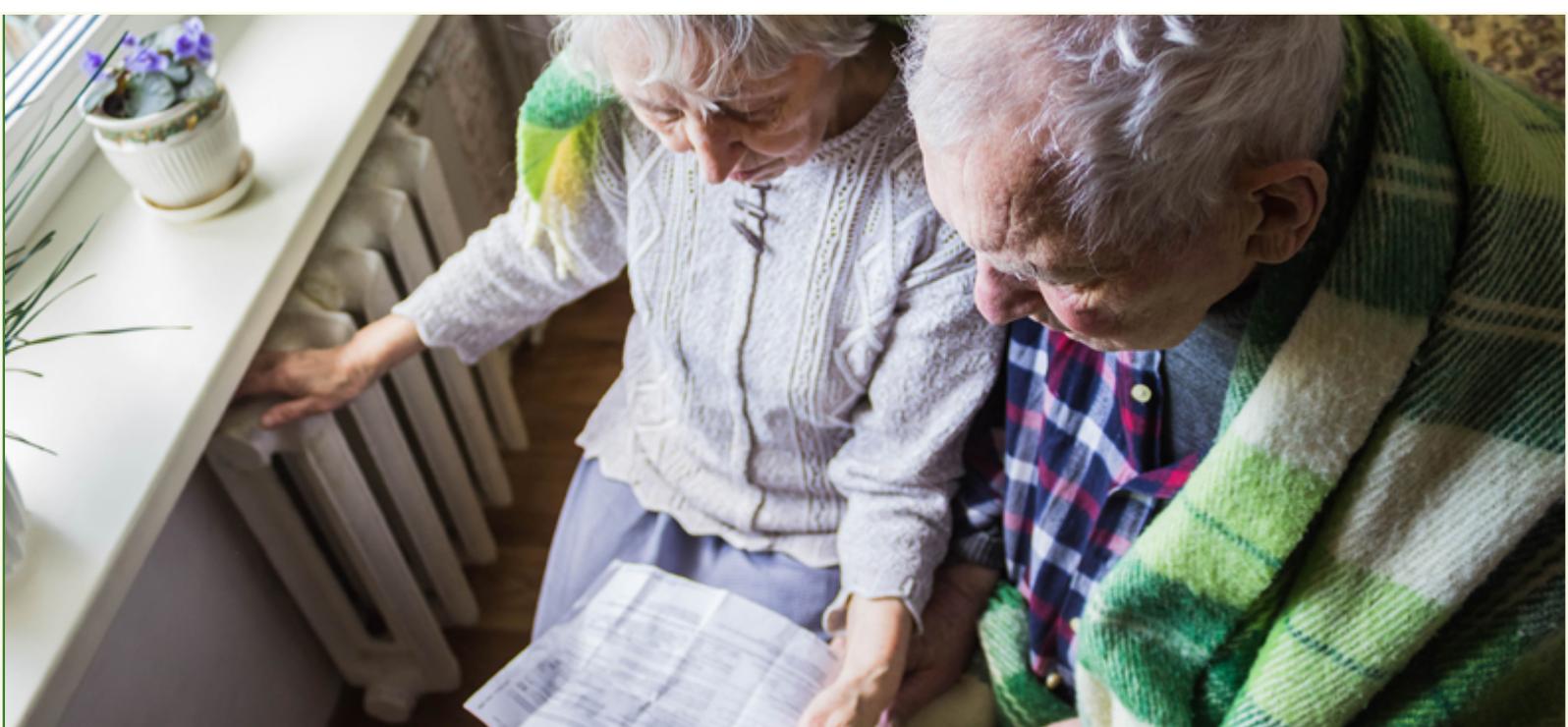
Studies have found strong associations between self-reported mental ill health, fuel poverty (including fuel debt) and cold homes. 28 per cent of young people lacking affordable warmth were at

risk of multiple mental health symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, compared with just four per cent of young people living in sufficiently warm homes⁹.

Fuel poverty can have an impact on other aspects of people's lives, including nutrition, education, employment and social inclusion. One study found that 65 per cent of low income households that had cut back spending on energy had also done so for spending on food, and 59 per cent of those reducing expenditure on food had done the same for spending on heating¹⁰.

Fuel poor households are more likely to miss out on school or employment due to cold-related ill health¹¹ and to adopt certain behaviours such as going to bed early or not inviting people to their house due to their cold home, leading them to become socially isolated⁹.

As well as its effects on the household, fuel poverty often results in increased property maintenance costs due to condensation, damp and mould growth. This can send householders deeper into fuel poverty as well as exacerbate health problems.



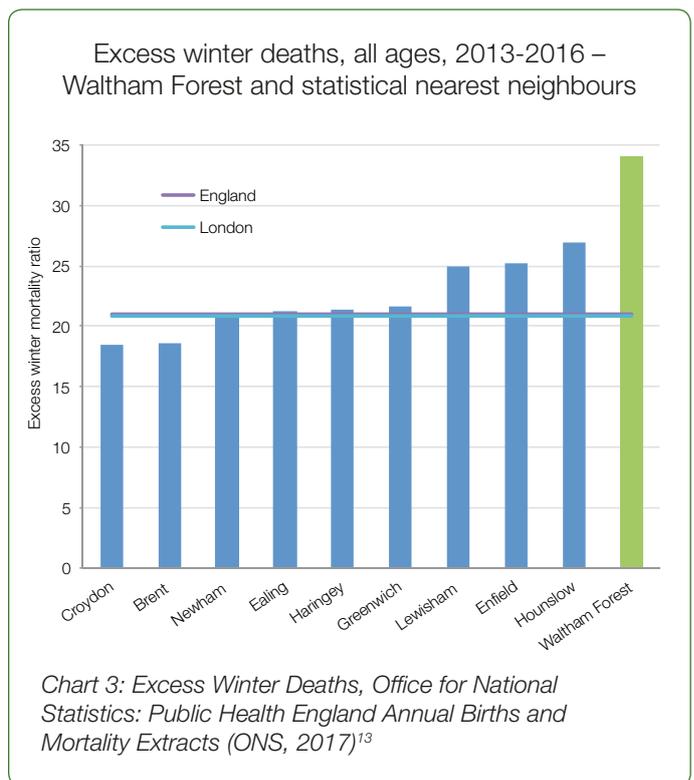
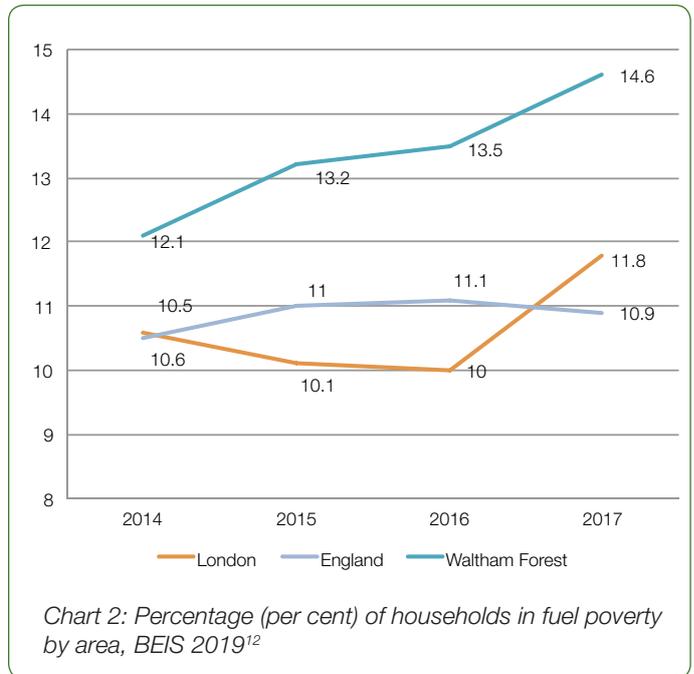
What is the situation in Waltham Forest?

Waltham Forest has the third highest level of fuel poverty of all London boroughs. Between 2014 and 2017, the proportion of Waltham Forest households in fuel poverty rose from 12.1 per cent to 14.6 per cent, totalling an estimated 14,562 households meeting the government’s fuel poverty criteria.

In Waltham Forest, there are on average 104 excess winter deaths (EWD) per year, which is proportionally above the EWD level for London and England, as reported by the Public Health Outcomes Framework¹³.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that 30 per cent of EWDs are attributable to cold homes meaning that the average number of cold-related excess winter deaths in Waltham Forest is 31. The Department of Health in 2009 estimated that for every cold-related death there are eight non-fatal hospital admissions⁷. For Waltham Forest, this means that for the 31 cold-related deaths that occur each winter, there are at least 248 hospital admissions.

In terms of NHS costs, tackling the root causes of 30 per cent of excess winter deaths in Waltham Forest has the potential to save the health service costs in the region of £533,696 to £611,320 each year¹⁴. This estimate does not take into account the costs faced when patients are delayed from being discharged from hospital because they are waiting for a care package to be arranged.



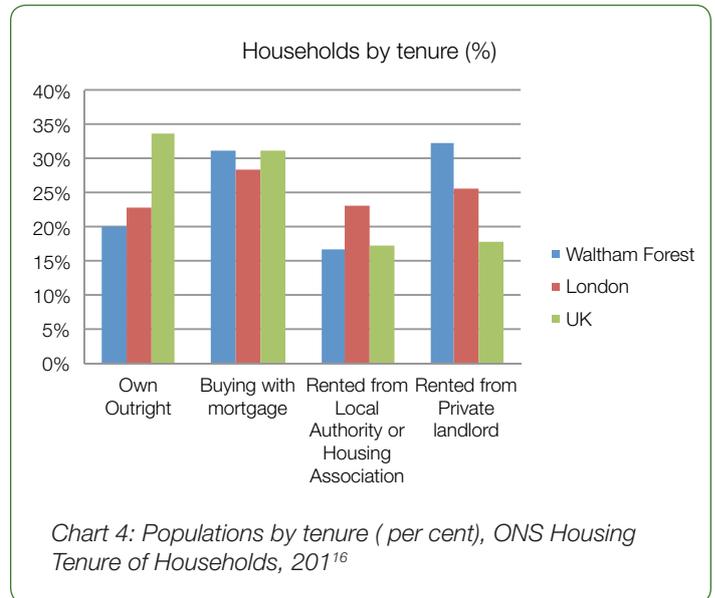
Why is fuel poverty so high in Waltham Forest?

One of the reasons for the high level of fuel poverty in our borough in comparison to other London boroughs is likely to be the age of our homes. 60 per cent of Waltham Forest's private sector homes were built pre-1919, in comparison with only 25 per cent of England's private sector homes¹⁵.

Older homes tend to be less energy efficient as they often have solid walls and no wall insulation meaning that heat is lost more quickly through the walls. Homes can be retrofitted with wall insulation, however the costs of doing this are quite high and therefore beyond the reach of many households. Older homes also tend to have older heating systems that are inefficient, costing the household more to run and that can be too expensive to upgrade.

As well as the age of our stock, a contributing factor to fuel poverty in the borough is the lower median weekly earnings of Waltham Forest residents, in comparison to other boroughs. At £529.20, Waltham Forest has the seventh lowest median weekly earnings of all London boroughs (ONS, 2017).

In Waltham Forest, we have a high proportion of homes that are privately rented, many of which are older properties. For landlords, there is less incentive to invest in energy saving measures as they will not benefit from payback through reduced energy bills. Tenants tend to see their home as temporary therefore they are less likely to invest in energy efficiency measures themselves or ask their landlord to do so.



National and regional strategies that impact our work

‘Cutting the Cost of Keeping Warm’ A Fuel poverty strategy for England 2015

In 2015 the UK government published its fuel poverty strategy for England. The strategy included a new statutory fuel poverty target. The target is to ‘ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency rating of B and C, by 2030’, with 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.

The strategy cites the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme introduced in 2013 and the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards 2015 for private rented homes as two key ways to encourage retrofitting with energy efficiency measures to help tackle fuel poverty.

Government began reviewing its fuel poverty strategy in Summer 2019. Any changes made will be taken into account in the annual review of our fuel poverty action plan.

Clean Growth Strategy 2017

In 2017, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy published the Clean Growth Strategy, with the objective to ‘deliver increased economic growth and decreased [carbon] emissions’. The Strategy highlights the importance of reducing energy bills for consumers as well as reducing carbon emissions by improving energy efficiency. The UK’s Clean Growth Strategy from 2017 includes an ambition to bring all rental properties up to EPC level C by 2030, ‘where practical, cost-effective and affordable’ however no further details on this proposal are evident as of August 2019.

Greater London Authority (GLA) Fuel poverty action plan 2018

The GLA published an action plan in 2018 focusing on alleviating fuel poverty and reducing the fuel poverty gap. It refers to the Mayor’s Warmer Homes Scheme, which provides grants for energy improvements, as a key source of funding for tackling fuel poverty in London. The Mayor also promotes the National Grid Warm Homes Fund as a ‘key near-term opportunity to tackle fuel poverty’ and states that ‘First Time Central Heating (FTCH) can make a profound difference to reducing energy costs’. Our strategy uses the Mayor’s action plan as guidance for developing local initiatives to help us tackle fuel poverty.

NICE guideline NG6 - Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes, 2015

In 2015, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published a guideline with a set of recommendations aiming to improve the health and wellbeing of people vulnerable to the cold. These recommendations have been carefully considered as part of our consultation with the Health and Wellbeing Board and our new action plan addresses each recommendation.

Local strategies that impact our work

Housing strategy 2019 – 2024

Waltham Forest Council launched its new Housing Strategy in 2019, which focuses on meeting its housing delivery target of 18,000 homes over the next 10 years, tackling homelessness and improving homes to ensure they are decent, safe and healthy. The Council has committed to seek funding opportunities to improve energy efficiency of homes of all tenures in the borough and supporting landlords to meet minimum energy efficiency standards.

Climate Emergency strategy

In April 2019 the Council joined more than 100 local authorities across the country in declaring a Climate Emergency and committed to preparing and implementing a new Climate Emergency Strategy (which will replace the previous Climate Change Strategy) and establishing an independent Climate Emergency Commission. The Commission will make recommendations for how we can tackle a global issue in a local context. The Climate Emergency Strategy will contain an action plan which will include actions which support energy efficiency retrofitting in homes and support for those in fuel poverty. The Council is currently working towards achieving zero carbon emissions by 2030.

Whilst the objective to improve domestic energy efficiency is reflected in both strategies, there is some tension between our fuel poverty and Climate Emergency work. Our fuel poverty objectives concentrate on enabling residents to heat their home properly – this may be through providing access to cheaper heating or access to funding to enable residents who are underheating to use more fuel to keep their home warm. The decarbonisation of electricity means that electricity will produce less carbon emissions than gas, making it the preferred low carbon heating option, however electricity remains two to three times more expensive than gas, therefore gas is the most affordable option for residents.

We aim to align our fuel poverty action plan with our developing Climate Emergency work as much as possible and will support pilot projects to explore alternative heating technologies, focusing on their impact on residents.

Food poverty action plan

Waltham Forest Council's food poverty action plan, published by the Health and Wellbeing Board in 2018, outlines how we intend to tackle food poverty in Waltham Forest, including what we can do to prevent it. As highlighted in this strategy, there are strong links between fuel and food poverty. We plan to work in partnership with Public Health to ensure that those identified at risk of food poverty or are using food banks are offered support with keeping warm at home, and vice versa.

Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2018 - 2021

Poverty and poor housing are listed as two of five key wider determinants of mental health within the Health and Wellbeing Board's Mental Wellbeing strategy. Recommendations within the Strategy include working with partners across sectors to mitigate the impacts of poverty and poor housing, to link service users to existing support services as well as delivering training to frontline staff coming to contact with those at risk of poor mental health. These recommendations are reflected within our Fuel poverty action plan.

Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) 2018 - 2023

'Reducing Emissions from developments and buildings' is one of the key aims of the borough's AQAP with a focus on promoting and delivering energy efficiency retrofitting projects in workplaces and homes. This aligns with this strategy's objective to increase the domestic energy efficiency rating of as many homes as possible to an EPC C.

Developing our strategy

During summer 2019, we consulted with key stakeholders from health, housing, sustainability, public health, voluntary and other sectors on how we can work together to tackle the issue of fuel poverty in our borough.

We discussed the key issues that impact the residents we work with across all settings and current and upcoming opportunities for identifying and supporting residents we already work with who may be struggling with their energy bills.

We looked at opportunities available to encourage and support people to improve energy efficiency of homes across the borough and how this links to council-wide work to tackle the climate emergency.

Whilst we do have processes in place for identifying and supporting fuel poor residents, it was agreed that we can do more. We want all key frontline services across the borough understand fuel poverty and know how to refer residents for support. We also want to ensure that staff work together to identify those at risk of cold-related illnesses and that this process is embedded into day-to-day work.

Following a stakeholder workshop and individual consultation with teams across the council, we developed three key objectives for tackling fuel poverty over the next five years.

Our key objectives 2020 - 2025:

- To reduce the number of borough residents that are in fuel poverty, targeting those with the highest fuel poverty gap
- To improve our processes for identifying residents who are in fuel poverty or at risk of ill-health due to a cold home
- To increase the number of homes in Waltham Forest with domestic energy efficiency ratings of C or above

Over the next few pages, we outline what we are already doing to tackle fuel poverty in Waltham Forest and what we plan to do over the next five years to achieve our new objectives.

Our action plan on page 20 onwards provides more detail about the action we will take.

Objective 1: To reduce the number of borough residents that are in fuel poverty, targeting those with the highest fuel poverty gap

Approximately 14.6 per cent of Waltham Forest residents are fuel poor. Waltham Forest has a higher level of fuel poverty than its neighbouring boroughs of Haringey, Hackney, Enfield and Redbridge and higher than London as a whole.

We want to do all we can to help as many residents as possible out of fuel poverty and we plan to do so by tackling the three drivers of fuel poverty and by increasing awareness of what can be done to prevent it.

What we are already doing

- Waltham Forest Council currently has a contract with a local fuel poverty charity called the HEET Project, which supports fuel poor residents by providing free home energy checks, advice and energy efficiency improvement measures.
- In 2018, Waltham Forest Council was successfully awarded £500,000 Warm Homes Fund grant by National Grid towards a fuel poverty project. The project will deliver gas connections and first time central heating systems to 200 fuel poor households with expensive and inefficient electric heaters

What we plan to do

- To target residents and their landlords in the private rented sector through a mix of enforcement, incentivisation and awareness raising
- To provide outreach sessions targeting residents, particular those not engaged online
- To ensure that social tenants have access to comprehensive information and advice on how to reduce fuel bills
- To successfully complete our First Time Central Heating project, installing 200 new central heating systems in homes across the borough
- To identify new funding options for fuel poor households for support with energy efficiency improvements



Objective 2: To improve our processes for identifying residents who are in fuel poverty or at risk of ill-health due to a cold home

We want to improve the way in which we identify households who are fuel poor or who are at risk of becoming fuel poor so that we can support them as early as possible to reduce the risk of cold-related ill health.

We want to make sure that staff from across all sectors in Waltham Forest are involved in identifying residents and that we are reaching residents who are at a higher risk of fuel poverty such as respiratory and cardiac patients in health settings and residents living in inefficient homes.

To do this, we want staff to have a better understanding of fuel poverty, its signs and causes and what we can do to support them. We also need to make use of data available to us which could help us to identify residents in need of support as well as linking in to existing work such as the Council's food poverty action plan.

What we are already doing

- In 2019, Waltham Forest Council, in partnership with Enfield Council, successfully bid for a £86,000 funding grant from National Grid Warm Homes Funding towards a project to deliver health and housing training and outreach across Waltham Forest and Enfield.
- We received energy awareness and fuel debt advice training courses for staff in Waltham Forest fully funded by the National Energy Alliance (NEA), which has helped staff to better understand and recognise fuel poverty and understand the different ways to support residents.
- Waltham Forest Council's licensing team is helping to tackle poor property conditions by making sure private landlords are complying with their licence conditions under our licensing scheme. The scheme aims to reduce anti-social behaviour, however it also helps us to ensure landlords fix property issues, such as cold hazards.

What we plan to do

- To develop opportunities to train public sector and voluntary workers in Waltham Forest to ensure we are identifying and supporting residents at risk of fuel poverty using a consistent and joined up approach
- To work with other stakeholders to understand and plan what fuel poverty service provision is required in the long term
- To increase local understanding of fuel poverty and encourage residents to self-refer for support
- To improve partnership working between health and housing
- To embed fuel poverty assessments into customer interactions across key sectors
- To keep our website up to date with energy and funding advice for residents and use social media channels to promote new schemes and raise awareness



Case study

Supporting residents with long term health conditions to keep their home warm

HEET met Mrs S, aged 83, at an energy advice session at Whipps Cross Hospital. She had suffered a stroke and was attending an outpatient's appointment, accompanied by her neighbour, following a lengthy hospital admission. Talking to her in the outpatients' room, the neighbour mentioned that Mrs S has no central heating or hot water in her home - something that may well have contributed to her becoming ill and would certainly hinder her recovery.

HEET carried out a home visit and found that Mrs S's only heating was a gas fire in the living room. Any heat provided by this fire would have been quickly lost through the draughty doors and windows and uninsulated loft. Hot water had only ever been available in the kitchen, provided by an electric immersion heater, but this was broken so Mrs S was washing and bathing in cold water.

Whilst keen to get the hot water fixed, Mrs S was reluctant to have gas central heating fitted as she thought it would be enormously disruptive. With the neighbour's help, we encouraged Mrs S to allow a heating engineer to visit and explain what would be involved. Mrs S liked the engineer and when the neighbour said she could stay at her house during the day whilst the work progressed, Mrs S agreed to the heating being installed. Mrs S already had a gas connection so the work could progress quickly and was fully funded by two grants – one from National Grid's Warm Homes Fund and one from the Greater London Authority's Warmer Homes scheme.

Gas central heating, with a combination boiler providing hot water and thermostatically controlled heating in every room, was installed over a three-day period. Once this work was complete, HEET installed loft insulation, draught proofed the doors and windows and fitted radiator panels behind the radiators. These works provide Mrs S with a theoretical annual saving of £652 on her fuel bill and reduce her carbon emissions by 2.1 tonnes. In reality, as Mrs S only had one gas fire, her savings will not be as high as she was significantly under-heating her home. She will now be able to keep her home properly heated in every room, reducing her risk of cold-related ill health.

Once heating and insulation had been installed, HEET helped Mrs S estimate what her new annual gas and electricity usage would be. Mrs S had never changed suppliers before and was on a standard tariff with different suppliers, paying on receipt of a quarterly bill. Once she saw that she could save £382 per year by switching to a dual fuel/direct debit tariff with a different company, she was keen to switch supplier. Her new supplier enables her to keep the Warm Home Discount, which she had assumed she would lose if she ever switched supplier.

As a vulnerable older customer, we also encouraged Mrs S to sign up to the Priority Service Register and she is delighted that she now receives bills in large print and will receive a free annual gas safety check.

Objective 3: To increase the number of homes in Waltham Forest with domestic energy efficiency ratings of C or above

Tackling one of the key drivers of fuel poverty in our borough, poor domestic energy efficiency, will help to reduce energy demand, which will reduce fuel bills for residents as well as carbon emissions associated with home energy use. As well as reducing fuel bills, increased energy efficiency will help improve the condition of a property by reducing damp and mould which can cause ill-health.

Cost-effective measures to improve energy efficiency are recommended on a home's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and might include:

- Loft, floor and external, internal and cavity wall insulation
- Efficient A+ condensing boilers
- Energy efficient appliances and low energy lighting
- Renewable energy such as solar panels and air source heat pumps
- A+ double glazing

By improving energy efficiency of homes in our borough, we not only help households who are fuel poor, we can also prevent future households from falling into fuel poverty. It also plays a key part in tackling the Climate Emergency by reducing carbon emissions from housing which accounts for over half of the borough's total emissions.

What we're already doing

- We are continually working to improve our own housing stock and have delivered energy efficiency improvement works over the last few years. This work helps improve conditions for our tenants as well as reducing our borough's carbon emissions. This includes:
 - Lighting upgrades using low energy LED bulbs
 - Over 600 boiler upgrades to A rated condensing boilers

- Replacing electric storage heaters with communal boiler systems in three tower blocks
- A solar panel pilot with battery storage
- An onsite energy centre at the Marlowe Road Estate development
- Eligible residents in Waltham Forest have benefited from energy efficiency measures fully funded by the Greater London Authority (GLA) Warmer Homes Scheme. 64 private households in Waltham Forest have received funded measures so far.
- Waltham Forest Council's licensing team can now use the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) set by central government to enforce landlords to make energy efficiency improvements to their properties with EPCs rated F or G.

What we plan to do

- To align closely with the Climate Emergency strategy and action plan with the shared aim to improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty
- To identify funding opportunities and suitable project proposals to help improve energy efficiency of homes across Waltham Forest
- To focus on identifying homes with the poorest EPC ratings of F and G and establish ways to support these households to improve their energy efficiency.
- To identify opportunities to make energy efficiency improvements to our own council stock, and properties we use for temporary accommodation

In 2016, Waltham Forest Council completed a pilot project providing nine council homes with solar photovoltaic panels and battery storage. We now plan to provide more households with battery storage, enabling them to use solar energy in the evenings



How do we tackle fuel poverty in Waltham Forest?

The following table outlines our action plan for achieving our key objectives over the next five years.

New legislation and strategies relating to fuel poverty and climate change is frequently being developed, presenting us with new opportunities to support fuel poor residents. To ensure we are doing everything possible to meet our objectives and that our work keeps in step to national and local policies, we will review and update our action plan on a yearly basis.

Key objective	Action
To reduce the number of residents that are in fuel poverty, targeting those with the highest fuel poverty gap	Deliver switching and tailored energy saving advice including correct use of heating controls to social housing residents – particularly targeting tenants in arrears
	Run awareness campaigns targeted at private sector landlords to cover switching suppliers, pre-payment meter support - emphasizing the benefits to both tenants and landlords
	Regular surgeries led by fuel poverty provider at local community hubs with targeted sessions including maximising income
	Complete our joint funded first-time central heating project
	Complete our Health and Housing fuel poverty project funded by the Warm Homes Fund
	Work with the fuel poverty provider to identify and apply for further funding opportunities to support fuel poor households
Key objective	Action
To improve our processes for identifying local residents who are in fuel poverty or at risk of ill-health due to a cold home	Deliver training for local staff on identifying and supporting residents who might be fuel poor
	Identifying further funding opportunities for staff training
	Develop a schedule of regular and timely reminders for all relevant teams including housing, health and social care about recognising fuel poverty and making referrals
	Identifying suitable points for embedding fuel poverty assessments and support into the 'patient journey' – with focus on respiratory and cardiac illnesses
	Increase the number of local residents signed up to their energy supplier's Priority Services Register and/or in receipt of the Warm Home Discount
	Work with other sectors to plan for fuel poverty support provision in the long term
	Establish a regular fuel poverty awareness campaign via social media, local communities facilities (libraries, children's centres) and council correspondence on different topics including WHD and fuel bill payment methods
	Establish connections with food poverty services and work collaboratively to support households
Key objective	Action

How do we tackle fuel poverty in Waltham Forest?

To increase the number of households with domestic energy efficiency ratings of C or above	Apply for Carbon Offset Funding for housing improvement projects including potential pilot projects
	Proactively identify homes with F and G EPCs and provide advice and access to funding
	Proactively target private rented homes with F or G EPCs to provide guidance on landlords obligations and enforce energy efficiency improvements where required
	Incentivising landlords to install energy efficiency measures as part of the Retrofit Together scheme
	Incentivising landlords we lease from to install energy efficiency measures
	Setting local EPC housing targets for all tenures, including our Registered housing Providers, in line with our Climate Emergency strategy
	Identifying feasible energy efficiency improvements when visiting homes to carry out repairs and ensuring tenants know how to use heating controls as part of a pre-winter campaign
	Identifying suitable energy efficiency improvements when DFG funded works are carried out
	Refer residents to the GLA Warmer Homes funding scheme and similar funding schemes

Measuring our success

Fuel poverty levels and excess winter deaths are impacted by external factors we are unable to control so it can be difficult to measure the impact of our work using these statistics.

We will look at other ways to measure our impact, including:

- Number of households whose fuel poverty gap has been reduced or removed
- Number of homes retrofitted with energy efficiency measure(s)
- Change in average SAP rating

Monitoring our progress

A six-monthly progress report will be provided to the Leadership Team and Portfolio Lead Member.

An annual fuel poverty update will be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board with recommended updates to the action plan.

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