

Minutes: London Fuel Poverty Partnership

Date: 16 May 2019

Time: 10.00 – 12.00

Location: Greater London Authority, City Hall, Queens Walk, London SE1 2AA

Attendees

Shirley Rodrigues, Greater London Authority (Co-chair) - SR
Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard, Greater London Authority (Co-chair) - DWB
Audrey Gallagher, Energy UK – AG
Adam Scorer, National Energy Action
Cllr Claudia Webbe, London Councils - CW
Jo Sauvage - Islington Clinical Commissioning Group
Ben Golding, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy - BG
Megha Tewari - Ofgem
Andre Lotz – NHS England
Kelly Greer – Association for Decentralised Energy
Marie Jones – SGN
Hannah Slater – Generation Rent

GLA officers: John Kolm-Murray - JKM, James Hardy - JH, Daniel Drillsma-Milgrom – DDM,
Katie Lindsay – KL

Apologies:

Dermot Nolan, Ofgem
Victoria MacGregor, Citizens Advice
Dr Joanne Wade, Association for Decentralised Energy
John Brouder, North East London NHS Foundation Trust
Gill Payne, National Housing Federation
Andy Hearn, London Fire Brigade

1. Welcome and introductions

- 1.1 SR welcomed everyone and introductions were made.
- 1.2 SR introduced Debbie Weekes-Bernard, the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement and Co-Chair of the Fuel Poverty Partnership.

2. Minutes of the last meeting, 10 January 2019

- 2.1 Link to the GLA private rented sector information page was circulated. Generation Rent will be updating their webpages linked from there.
- 3.1 Link to the UK Fuel Poverty Monitor was circulated.
- 3.7 Health data needs not yet identified so may follow up in future.
- 3.9(i) Safe & Well evaluation report not yet ready but will be circulated when it is
- 3.9(ii) Martin O'Brien has been in touch with the London Resilience Officer. He has not achieved traction. JKM to follow up.

- 3.9(iii) Fuel poverty was raised at the March London Councils Transport and Environment Committee. This is on the agenda.
- 3.9(iv) Fuel Poverty Support Fund Round 1 boroughs have been invited to send case studies on fuel poverty initiatives to Public Health England.
- 5.3 Safer Heating events list was circulated.
- 6.2.3 *Outstanding actions from previous meetings*
- i. The Building Research Establishment (BRE) have indicated that boroughs can sign up for a free 30-day licence trial for the Excess Cold Calculator. The Housing Team have been asked to promote this to boroughs.

3. Progress update

- 3.1 JKM provided an update on behalf of the GLA.
- In March 2019 Warmer Homes was closed to new applicants. There had been 1,814 applications in just over a year. The next phase of Warmer Homes will open in the autumn.
 - Fuel Poverty Support Fund– between February 2018 and March 2019 a total of 2,557 households were supported and 1,628 home energy visits delivered. Over 150 new partner organisations were recruited, and clients were supported in every London borough.
 - Private rented sector – Warmer Homes was extended to the private rented sector in November on a trial basis and 111 applications were received across 20 boroughs. We are represented on the expert working group exploring the trajectory of the minimum energy efficiency standards to 2030. BEIS expect to issue a policy discussion paper this year.
 - Energy for Londoners supply company – the procurement to find an energy supply company for GLA to work with is close to conclusion. We will want to engage the Partnership in promoting it
 - Energy Company Obligation (ECO) activity in London – Data published in April shows that ECO activity in London in 2018 was up 82% on 2017 but still substantially below the level our population justifies.
- 3.2 SR invited members of the Fuel Poverty Partnership (FPP) to provide updates:
- 3.3 AG – Energy UK focusing on self-disconnection and encouraging vulnerable consumers to contact their supplier.
- 3.4 AS - NEA aims to influence policies and frameworks, creating single points of contact. Annual Fuel Poverty Monitor covers the whole of the UK to identify gaps. NEA ran a warm and safe homes campaign working successfully with the London Fire Brigade to promote to the public. NEA has an ambition to have greater focus in London.
Action: JKM to link AS with relevant GLA colleagues
- 3.5 JS introduced herself as the Chair of Islington Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and thanked the Partnership for the invitation to her first meeting. The CCG is a group of clinical leaders and as Chair she is well placed to distribute information and grow collaboration. The long-term plan for health is to aggregate systems and forge links throughout the primary care network with a focus on social prescribing etc. DWB expressed an interest in social prescribing and wider determinants.
- 3.6 MT – Ofgem is publishing a new vulnerability strategy, of which fuel poverty is one key strand. The draft strategy also looks at low incomes, mental health and disability, setting out Ofgem's priorities. Ofgem and government social policy need to come together, and their team will come to future events to speak about the strategy when it is more developed. MT also noted that a large amount of data is publicly available.

- Action:** MT to provide links to relevant data. JKM to circulate with the minutes.
- 3.7 AL introduced himself as the Better Care Manager for the London region. The role of the Better Care Fund is to deliver integrated health and social care through jointly agreed priorities. A key driver is flow and demand in and out of hospital. supports local areas to meet their obligations and can link the FPP to appropriate partners.
- 3.8 KG – ADE and ACE research are working on a Horizon 2020 project including work on the private rented sector - looking at housing health and safety, minimum energy efficiency standards (MEES) and ways to incentivise landlords, regulation and enforcement.
- 3.9 HS – Generation Rent are lobbying for energy efficiency works to be tax deductible. Also lobbying for changes to MEES especially in HMOs. SR asked what the landlord/ tenant split was for private rented sector Warmer Homes applications. *Later established that it was 84% landlord applications.*

4. Presentation: Fuel Poverty Strategy for England

- 4.1 BG of BEIS presented on the **Fuel Poverty Strategy** Consultation Document.
- 4.2 The Government have a legal responsibility to publish a fuel poverty strategy and the 2015 strategy committed to publishing an updated strategy every few years. In summer BEIS will publish their consultation with an updated strategy by the end of 2019.
- 4.3 A key aspiration is to update the way fuel poverty is measured to better track against the statutory target, broadening the measure to capture all homes living in Bands D-G
- 4.4 The current low-income high cost metric is very complicated and relative so it's hard to track progress and get more funding. The new metric would show absolute figures and greater numbers in fuel poverty but will show a decline over time to better track progress.
- 4.5 BEIS intend to incorporate the vulnerability principle in alignment with National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidelines.
- 4.6 A new sustainability principle will be incorporated to align fuel poverty targets with priorities in the Clean Growth Strategy (CGS) and the Industrial Strategy.
- 4.7 The new policy will address how to overcome the eight challenges identified in the 2015 strategy and how to target innovation budgets better.
- 4.8 SR thanked BG for his presentation and said that the new strategy definition should reflect the London experience and integrate the carbon reduction agenda.
- 4.9 JKM added that the GLA's key concerns relate to the impact that changing definitions will have in London and that we do not receive a fair share of ECO.
- 4.10 JH updated on the GLA's meeting with Claire Perry MP, noting that there was the offer of convening London and other UK cities to consider ECO delivery in an urban context. DWB asked if it was possible to incorporate the Minimum Income Standard (MIS).
Action: BG to check whether MIS is being considered and report back to the group.
- 4.11 AS commented that the FPP should aggregate responses to the consultation.
Action: JKM to coordinate shared responses.
- 4.12 JS expressed support for integration with NICE guidelines to help line up language with health sector to add legitimacy.
- 4.13 AS noted that less than 10 per cent of fuel poor homes are currently at a C rating. The challenge is movement of tenants and the risk of people entering fuel poverty by moving into an inefficient property, therefore improving stock is key.

5. Debt and disconnection update

- 5.1 AG provided an update on debt and disconnection on behalf of Energy UK, informing that they had the best results to date from the annual Safety Net Audit.
- 5.2 AG updated on the fuel bank initiative which involves food banks issuing fuel vouchers. More comprehensive partnerships are needed so that suppliers can effectively signpost customers to help and support. Energy UK is investigating whether a framework agreement could be created to aid partnership arrangements. There is also a need to ensure agencies have appropriate information.
- 5.3 AG said that there is a lot of industry wide data on vulnerability.
Action: AG to provide information on how to access data.
- 5.4 JKM noted that we need to work together on the advice landscape to ensure it is clear and accessible. SR confirmed that the GLA would be happy to take part in a pilot initiative
Action: JKM to discuss energy advice landscape in London with AG.
- 5.5 There was a discussion of various improvements which are required to simplify access to support services and reduce self-disconnection. AG to come back to the group.
Action: AG to provide an update on the framework for accessing support services.
- 5.6 MT noted that debt and disconnection are falling year on year, but there are problems with how big players manage debt. Ofgem will be publishing a report and naming companies not performing. Some companies are doing well on self-disconnection but others are not. A recent call for evidence on pre-payment meter self-disconnection showing worryingly poor quality of data. Policy proposals will be published in June.
- 5.7 AS - smart technologies present opportunities but industry also needs to identify who can intervene at the point of crisis and even the best suppliers are hampered by a lack of data.

6. Identifying the vulnerable

- 6.1 MJ presented on mapping fuel poverty and identifying the vulnerable. SGN has prioritised supporting the vulnerable and set ambitious targets for fuel poor network extensions.
- 6.2 To aid identification of vulnerability, engineers can make referrals for a range of free support services to ensure people are not vulnerable over winter.
- 6.3 SGN has a Help to Heat gas connections service and a Central Heating Grant Fund. The grant fund is a funded connection which can fund 50% of central heating installation.
- 6.4 The challenge of the Help to Heat Scheme is that eligibility calculations are complicated and often requires asking intrusive questions on the doorstep. Take up has been low.
- 6.5 SGN commissioned the Energy Saving Trust to develop a predictive model using relevant datasets to forecast the likelihood that an off-gas property is in fuel poverty.
- 6.6 There was a discussion on how to reach the fuel poor and the availability of data. JKM noted that the GLA is keen that network operators work with boroughs, but there needs to be better guidance on data sharing. AL noted that right care data is publicly available.
Action: JKM to look at a data sub group of the partnership.

7. Health and social care

- 7.1 CW noted that the recent London Councils meeting identified the importance of alignment with NICE guidelines and several questions were raised which she will feed in to JKM to incorporate into these minutes, with the key action to identify the next steps
Action: CW to provide written feedback from the meeting. See below.

“The report was welcomed by the Committee and the issue of new build standards and overheating were raised in the discussion and it was asked whether any research could be done on the impact of this by the Partnership. The Home Energy Conservation Act

was also raised and TEC Members asked whether someone could produce a guidance note to support local authorities. TEC discussed the fact that many private landlords cannot afford renovations and whether this issue was being addressed by the London Fuel Poverty Partnership”

8. AOB

8.1 No further issues were raised.