

## **Fuel Poverty Partnerships**

### **Introduction**

This paper describes my recommendation that the Scottish Government establishes Fuel Poverty Partnerships (FPP) that will take a lead role in tackling fuel poverty issues across Scotland. This recommendation should be added to Chapter 6 Vulnerability and Health Care of the final report.

### **Rationale**

The Scottish Government convened the Rural Fuel Poverty Task Force as it recognises the issue of rural fuel poverty as an issue of national concern. A range of other issues that affect vulnerable groups such as, child and adult protection, alcohol and drugs, suicide prevention and violence against women are all rightly seen as areas of national importance. However, all of these agendas are supported by dedicated local partnerships that are tasked to coordinate local responses to these issues. I believe that establishing local FPPs with a nationally agreed role and remit would support the coordination of many of the recommendations made in chapter six of the task forces draft report. For example recommendations 6.2 to 6.8 all describe a need for partnership working and collaborative approaches to tackling rural fuel poverty. These recommendations could be carried out through fuel poverty partnerships. This would be similar to how responses to adult and child protection, alcohol and drugs, violence against women and suicide prevention are coordinated by local partnerships and this approach is proven to work.

### **A proposed model**

The agendas of child protection, adult protection, alcohol and drugs, suicide prevention and violence against women are all supported by dedicated partnerships usually based on local authority areas. These partnerships all have a guiding document that states, who should be members, what these partnerships should aim to achieve, how they choose their chair and how and what they should report to the Scottish Government to show the outcomes they achieve. These partnerships are all supported by strategic support staff and often a member of admin staff as well and this is funded by the Scottish Government. Fuel Poverty Partnerships would follow this tried and tested method for coordinating responses to these important issues locally.

The Scottish Government should draft a document called the Framework for Fuel Poverty Partnerships. This document will lay out the aims of the partnership, including its role and remit, expected membership and reporting arrangements to the Scottish Government. The role and remit would include the following, coordinating responses to rural fuel poverty, urban fuel poverty, mapping local services that can support people in fuel poverty, coordinating inter agency referrals, understand local statistics on fuel poverty and how to respond to trends, coordinate how funding is spent locally to ensure it is joined up, seek funds for research and new initiatives.

The partnerships should be imbedded within local planning arrangements such as health and social care partnerships and report into these structures. The chair or other senior representative of a local FPP should be represented at a strategic level within the health and social care partnerships to solely represent the issue of fuel poverty. The Framework will make clear that the Scottish

Government expect membership to include senior representation on these partnerships from NHS, Local Authorities, Fire and Rescue, Housing Associations local third sector organisations and HES. Partnerships would decide their own chair through discussion or a members vote.

The Scottish Government would support chairs through bringing them together on an annual basis to discuss common themes emerging from these partnerships so learning can be shared across the country. These partnerships would be ideally supported by an officer who is employed by one of the Fuel Poverty Partnership membership organisations. However, they would be expected to be neutral and work across the partnership with the sole aim of making the partnership work effectively. Admin support for the partnership would also be necessary.

A decision would need to be taken on how many local Fuel Poverty Partnerships are needed. As mentioned above Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships, Child Protection Committees, Adult Protection Committees, Violence Against Women Partnerships are almost all based on local authority areas (32 in total). I think we don't need as many as 32 but another option would include having a fuel poverty partnership based on health board area (total 14).