

The State of Rural Cumbria

Original Report Compiled by
ACTion with Communities in Cumbria
December 2013

Fuel Poverty Update

February 2014

Re-issued 27 February 2015 to coincide with
National Fuel Poverty Awareness Day



ACTion
with communities
in cumbria

Introduction

This update is issued to provide revised information on Fuel Poverty, as detailed in the Rural Living section of the State of Cumbria Report. The definition of Fuel Poverty has been amended, and rural data made available since December 2013, when the initial report was issued.

The full report, covering the issues of:

- An Ageing population
- Too few young people
- Disadvantage
- Health
- Rural Living – Including Fuel Poverty

is available on the ACT website here:

www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/ResourcesPublications/ResearchOtherPublications

Updated Fuel Poverty section - February 2014

Fuel Poverty¹

In July 2013 the Department for Energy and Climate Change issued amended data relating to fuel poverty in England. Calculated using a new definition, this provides a significantly different picture of this aspect of deprivation, compared with evidence generated using the previous definition of fuel poverty.

Here we compare those old and new definitions and explore the changes that the application of the new definition brings to our understanding of fuel poverty across Cumbria.

Old definition - Fuel poverty is said to occur where, in order to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth, a household needs to spend more than 10% of its income on total domestic fuel use (the 10% measure).

New definition – A household is said to be in fuel poverty if they have required domestic fuel costs that are above the national median level and, if they were to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line (the Low Income High Cost or LIHC measure).

Importantly, the LIHC measure gives consideration both to the cost of heating a home and to its occupants' ability to pay that cost, particularly focusing on those households that experience hardship as a result of their fuel costs.

The application of the new definition in Cumbria has two broad impacts upon the data, and on our understanding of fuel poverty as an aspect of deprivation.

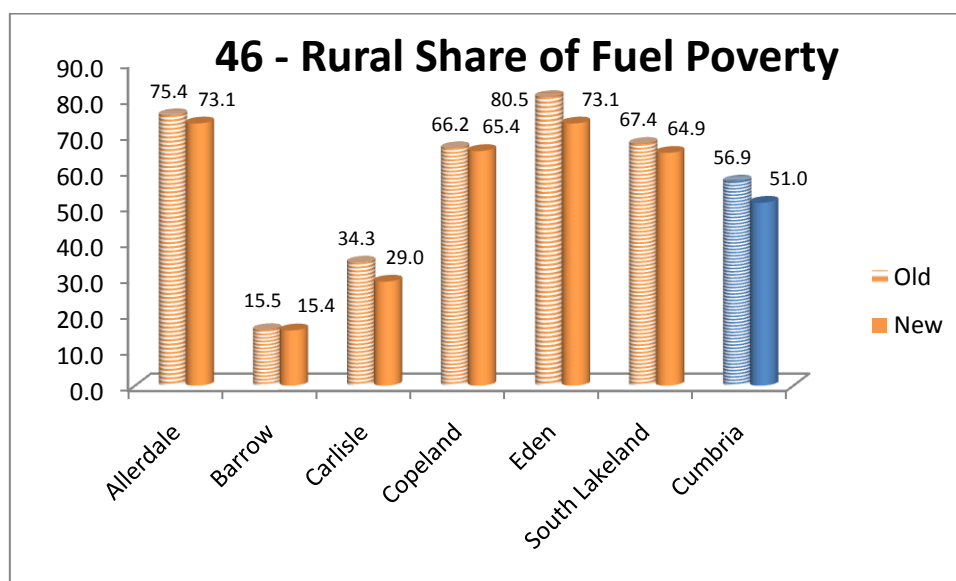
Firstly, the new measure significantly reduces the total number of households identified as being in fuel poverty. Secondly, the measure changes our understanding of the localities where fuel poverty is most prevalent, switching emphasis from rural communities that experience particularly high fuel costs because they are off mains gas and have a higher

¹ Source: DECC 2013

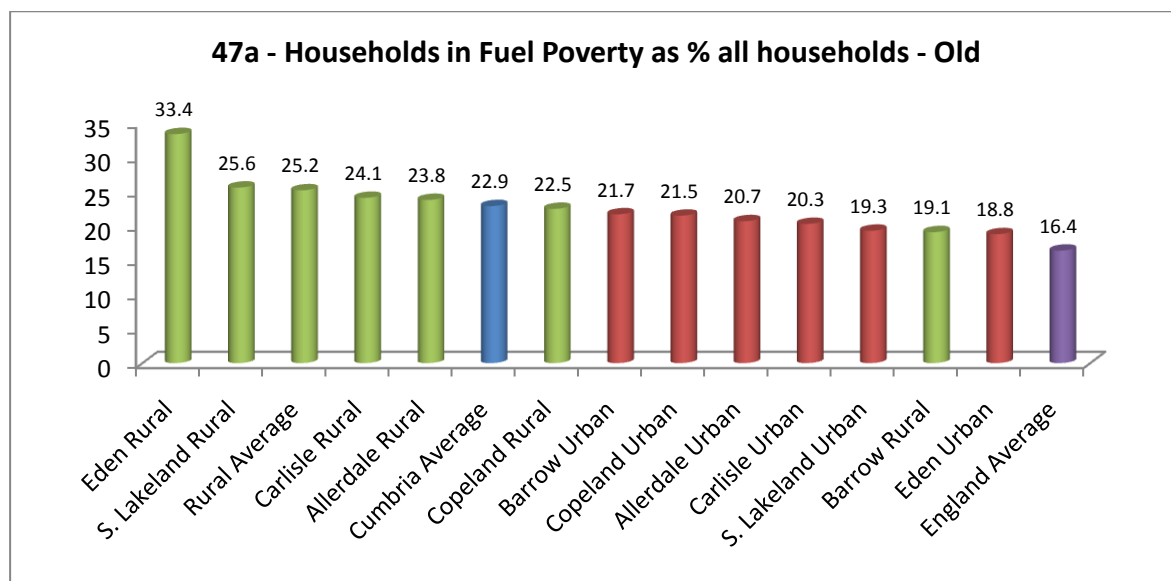
proportion of hard to heat homes to urban communities with a higher proportion of households with incomes close to the poverty line.

Using the new definition, 27820 (51015) households in Cumbria are in Fuel Poverty (12.5% of all households). 51% of these households or 14,180 (29040) are in our rural communities (numbers in brackets are figures derived using the old definition). As these figures show, the overall numbers of households affected by fuel poverty has changed quite dramatically, being reduced by 45%.

Chart 46 illustrates the rural share of fuel poverty in Cumbria, comparing the levels identified using the old and new definitions. As can be seen, the change here is less dramatic, the rural share is reduced using the new definition but, in four of the districts and Cumbria as a whole, a majority of households affected are in rural communities.

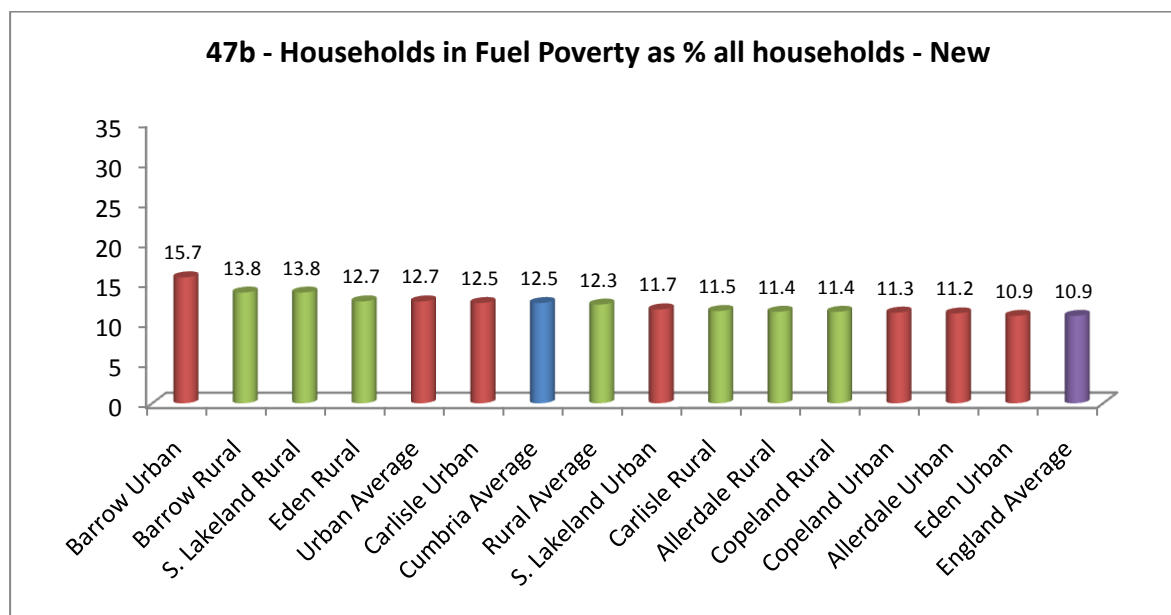


Charts 47a and 47b show the distribution of households in fuel poverty across the urban and rural parts of each Cumbrian district and indicates how the levels of deprivation under this indicator compare with the average for Cumbria and for England.



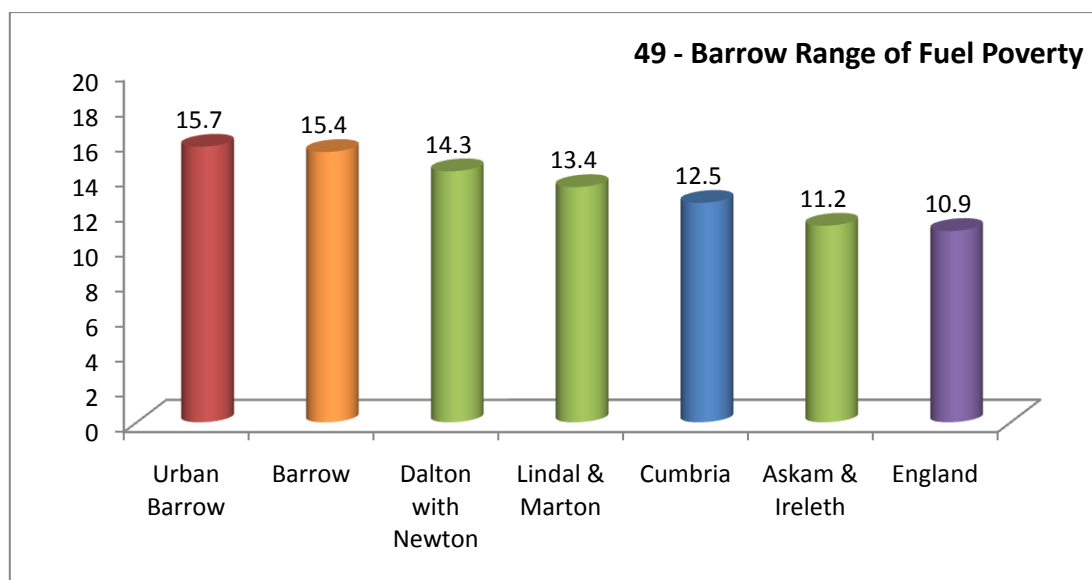
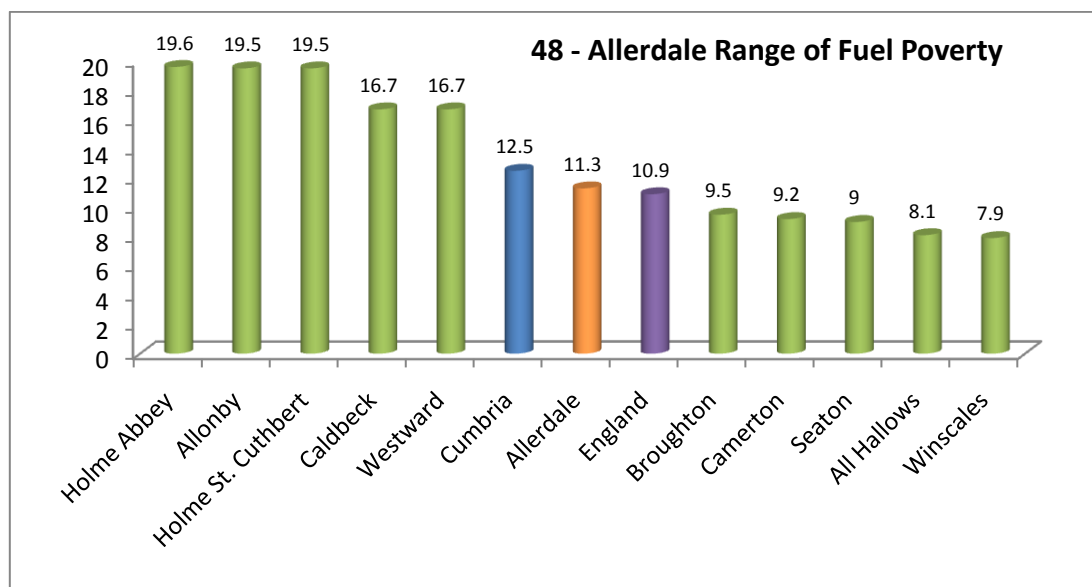
Comparing the two charts clearly demonstrates the impact that the changing of the definition of fuel poverty has made. Chart 47a based on the 10% measure shows high levels of deprivation across the County, but suggests that fuel poverty is at its highest in the rural parts of the Districts, especially Eden where a third of households were impacted.

In contrast, Chart 47b, which uses the LIHC measure, show both much lower levels of fuel poverty and a significantly different pattern of distribution. In this instance the pattern is much more mixed with both urban and rural areas featuring at both the higher and lower ends of the spread. Perhaps most striking is that the new definition highlights both urban and rural Barrow as the part of Cumbria with the highest levels of fuel poverty, displacing the off mains gas communities of South Lakeland and Eden to third and fourth in ranking respectively. Importantly, however, under both the old and new measures of fuel poverty, all parts of Cumbria show levels of fuel poverty equal or greater than the average for England, underlining this as an aspect of deprivation that demands significant attention.

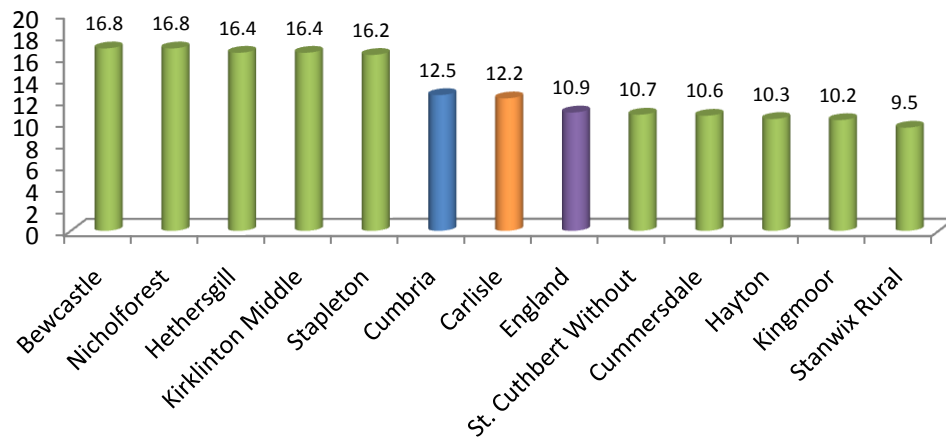


In the charts below, we illustrate the differing levels of fuel poverty that are apparent in rural Cumbria using the new LIHC measure when the data is examined at parish level. Each chart compares the rural parishes with the highest and lowest proportions of households in fuel poverty for each of Cumbria's Districts.

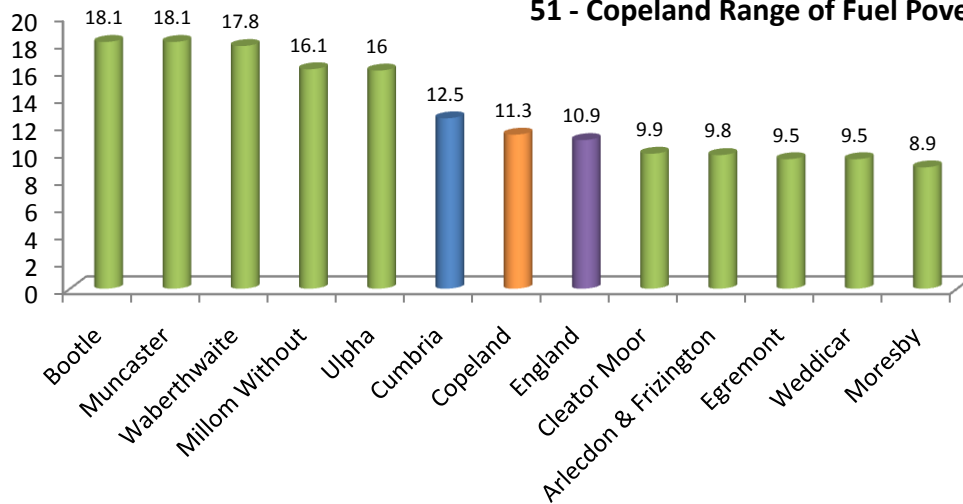
All of the charts show a significant variation between the least and the most deprived parts of each District, with the parishes where fuel poverty is at its highest having levels that greatly exceed the average for England and, in the case of Allerdale, approaching double the national average.



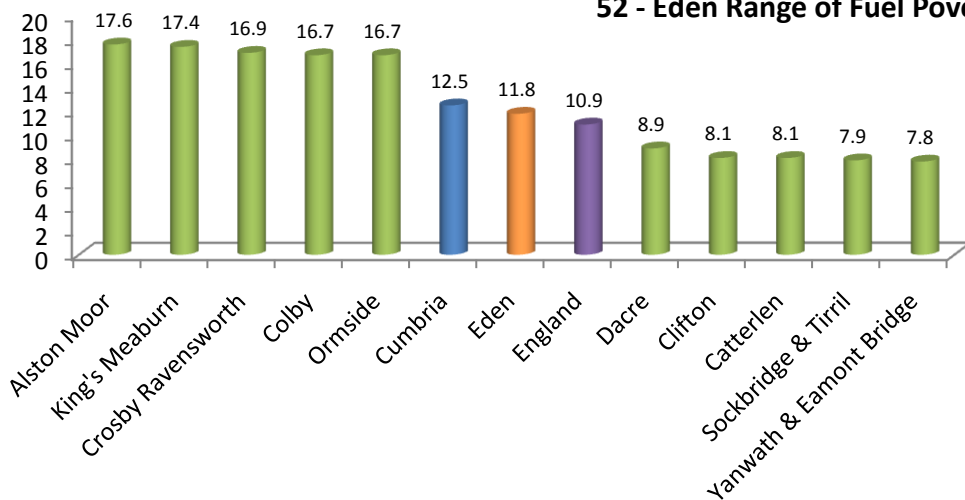
50 - Carlisle Range of Fuel Poverty

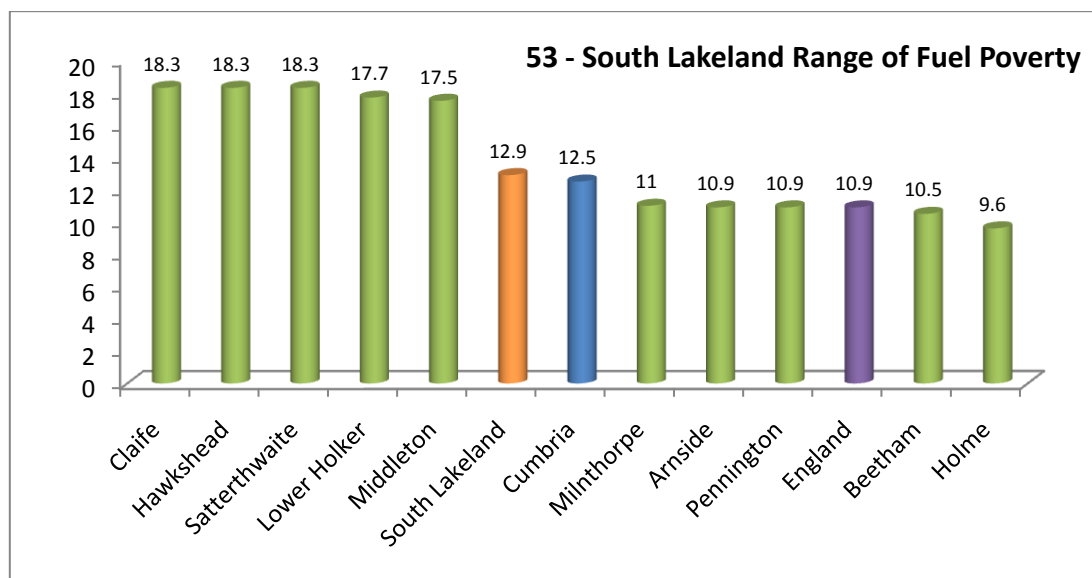


51 - Copeland Range of Fuel Poverty



52 - Eden Range of Fuel Poverty





Fuel Poverty (Rural Living) – Updated Summary

This section of the report sits within 'Rural Living' in the main report available here: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/ResourcesPublications/ResearchOtherPublications

Living in rural Cumbria presents residents with a range of challenges that, although not solely a rural concern, do require particular focus and appropriately tailored solutions.

The lack of mains gas in most Cumbrian rural communities and the age of the housing stock, mean that conventional solutions to fuel poverty, and the current grant programmes could be of little relevance.

New programmes encouraging community action to reduce CO2 emissions and manage the impacts of climate change may provide some options. The Bootle – Wellbank Scheme www.wellbankproject.co.uk and work Cumbria Action for Sustainability are undertaking with partners, provide useful information.

The ACT work with Churches Together in Cumbria on Affordable Warmth will also assist with local discussion and actions, available on our website from mid March 2015.

Keys Issues

- Lack of mains gas
- Older housing stock with poor insulation
- Poop access to information
- Confusing and complex information

Initiatives and Opportunities

- Lobby government to address energy pricing for rural communities with no mains gas
- Promote finance schemes to enable more energy efficient rural homes
- Promote self help and community discussion on local solutions
- Provide case studies and clear summaries of the information available

Potential Partners

- Cumbria Action for Sustainability
- Churches Together in Cumbria Rural Forum
- Cumbria Community Foundation – Winter Warmth Fund
- Local Authorities

www.cafs.org.uk

www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk

www.cumbriafoundation.org/winter-warmth-fund

www.cumbria.gov.uk

www.carlisle.gov.uk

www.eden.gov.uk

www.ageuk.org.uk/carlisleandeden

www.ageuk.org.uk/barrow

www.allerdale.gov.uk

www.copeland.gov.uk

www.southlakeland.gov

www.ageuk.org.uk/westcumbria

www.ageuk.org.uk/southlakeland

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