

Durham County Council - Home Energy Conservation Act Report

HOME ENERGY CONSERVATION ACT 1995 REPORTING 2021

Introduction

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 ('HECA') requires all 326 local authorities ('LA's) in England to submit reports to the Secretary of State demonstrating what energy conservation measures they have adopted to improve the energy efficiency of residential accommodation within that local authority (LA's) area. This covers measures to improve properties in the owner-occupier, private rented sector, and social rented sector. The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) uses data submitted through LAs HECA returns to inform policy thinking on energy efficiency, and to build an ongoing picture of local and national energy efficiency policy delivery.

HECA 2021 Reporting Requirements

The Report is divided by sections to capture information on a range of key themes:

Headline & Overview

- What main strategy and schemes LAs currently have to promote carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency, stakeholders involved and impact at a societal and economic level.

Communication

- How LA engage stakeholders (including consumers and businesses) to promote awareness of energy efficiency.

Green Local Supply Chain

- How LAs engage local businesses involved in the promotion of energy savings products and the societal benefits alongside any local economic impact this might have.

Private Rental Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

- How LAs enforce and promote awareness of the PRS Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards that came into force in April 2018.

Financial Support for Energy Efficiency

- Financial programmes used by LAs to promote energy efficiency.

Fuel Poverty

- How LAs identify those in fuel poverty and any initiatives used to address this.

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

- How LAs are using the recently introduced ECO 'flexible eligibility' programme to refer certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes, who are vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, to ECO obligated suppliers for support.

Smart Metering

- How LAs promote awareness and uptake of smart metering.

The questions which LAs are asked to report on to BEIS are shown below:

HECA Reporting Questions 2021

Number	Introductory Questions	Response
1	Name of Local Authority Type of Local Authority Name, job title and email address of official submitting report	Durham County Council (DCC) Unitary Council Cliff Duff, Housing Project Manager
Headline Overview		
2	Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties? If yes, please provide a link	Yes https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s119824/7%20Climate%20Change%20Action%20Plan%202020.pdf
3	What scheme(s) is your Local Authority planning to implement in support of energy saving/carbon reduction in residential accommodation properties in the next two years?	We are continuing to promote and maximise uptake of the national fuel poverty programmes including the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Phase 3; ECO Flexible Eligibility Criteria; Local Authority Delivery programme phase 1A & 1B and the Warm Homes Fund. We will also maximise uptake of ECO Phase 4 when it commences in 2022.
4	What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), such as the value of grants and other support made available, plus any other costs incurred (such as administration) as desired.	Over the period 2019 to 2021 we have approved 1,724 ECO Flex grant applications. Management, delivery and admin for all energy projects was approx.. £85,625 per annum.
5	What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?	We have a countywide Fuel Poverty Strategy and Action Plan to coordinate the assistance available countywide to fuel poor households. Activities are overseen by the County Durham Energy and Fuel Poverty Partnership that has membership from a wide range of partner organisations including AgeUK, CAB, East Durham Trust, Social Housing Providers, Fire and Rescue Service, Public Health etc.

6	<p>What has been, or will be, the outcome of the scheme(s)? These outcomes could include energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness or societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.</p>	<p>Over the period 2019 to 2021 1,724 low income owner occupier households have received energy efficiency measures including cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, solid wall insulation, high efficiency boilers or air source heat pumps.</p> <p>Our Managing Money Better Service assisted 1,147 households to reduce their energy bills, Warm Homes Discounts and fuel debt write off totalling £179,000.</p>
Communications		
7	<p>Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy?</p> <p>If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken.</p> <p>How do you communicate</p>	<p>Yes. DCC has the Managing Money Better service that provides free and impartial advice to residents on energy efficiency, obtaining a more competitive energy tariff, switching supplier and fuel debt write off. We also have the Warm Homes Campaign to promote awareness of energy efficiency grants and provides support with grant applications.</p> <p>We promote the service countywide using the Warm Homes Campaign network of partner organisations, staff awareness, Area Action Partnerships, social media and the Energy and Fuel Poverty Partnership and promotions via GP Surgeries.</p>
Local Green Supply Chain		
8	<p>Have you made any assessment, or undertaken any analysis of the existing capacity in your local energy efficiency retrofit supply chain to support the decarbonisation of buildings by 2050? If Yes, please summarise the outcomes.</p> <p>What actions are you taking, if any, to upskill and/or grow the local energy efficiency installer supply chain? This could include the facilitation of training, and local installer networking opportunities.</p> <p>If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.</p>	N/A

9	Do you have any plans to develop policies or initiatives in this space over the next five years as part of supporting your local decarbonisation efforts?	Yes this will be considered alongside planning for the roll out of ECO Phase 4.
10	How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?	We engage effectively with these contractors under the ECO and LAD funded programmes. However there have been some delays with contractors obtaining PAS2035 accreditation.
	Social Housing	
11	What action, if any, has your LA taken to install energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures in social housing? Have these been installed to a satisfactory quality? What actions (if any) have your social housing partners taken?	Measures have been installed using funding from the Warm Homes Fund and LAD programmes. Installed to a satisfactory quality.
12	Do you have easy access to the information/knowledge within your organisation that you would expect to need for social housing retrofit projects? (e.g. stock condition; property data; approach to procurement; alignment with existing internal maintenance/upgrade plans; tenant engagement and management plans; costings)	DCC does not own any social housing and therefore we do not hold data on stock condition of social housing. We do however work with the social housing providers on retrofit projects such as the current Local Authority Delivery programme. Also we hold stock condition data on owner occupier and private rented dwellings.
13	If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?	Unknown. This would be up to individual Social Housing Providers.
14	Have you experienced any challenges to retrofit, including during any previous government schemes you have taken part in (e.g. supply chain, funding, tenant cooperation, mixed tenure, split incentive, policy clarity, etc)? Please provide some detail. Have social housing partners reported any challenges to retrofit?	Main change is the new PAS2035 standard and the resultant extra cost for External Wall Insulation. Also huge shortage of skilled labour again increasing overall costs. Total impact has been an uplift of approx. 20% on each EWI install with average cost now £11,000 for a mid terrace 3 bed home.
15	How does your LA currently/how will your LA in future plan to go about identifying suitable housing stock and measures for retrofit? How do social housing partners identify suitable stock? By the same measures or via a different method?	We have purchased a Housing Stock Condition Model from the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and will utilise this data alongside our SAP Rating energy and fuel poverty database. Using their own asset management and maintenance software systems.

16	What considerations would make you more or less likely to apply for government funding? If known, what is the opinion of your social housing partners?	More likely if LA's were allowed to bid directly for ECO funding to allow LA's to manage and deliver area-based retrofit programmes using local contractors. Programmes focussed on off gas grid dwellings where properties are hard to treat and have high levels of fuel poverty.
17	To what extent are social housing tenants willing or unwilling to undergo retrofit, and what are the barriers and facilitators to their participation? If known, is this the same opinion across all social housing tenants or is it different with HA and ALMO tenants?	DCC does not have any social housing stock.
18	Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks? What encourages them to co-operate?	We do not hold this information
	Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards	
19	Is your authority aware of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards regulations requiring private rentals in England and Wales to meet a minimum energy performance rating of EPC Band E as of April 2020, unless a valid exemption applies?	Yes
20	Which team within your authority is responsible for, leading on enforcement of the PRS minimum standard? Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team.	Environmental Health and Trading Standards. Trading Standards Manager. ced@durham.gov.uk
21	What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?	Private sector landlords forum and promotions to landlords and tenants by Trading Standards.
22	What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords, budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?	Limited resources.

23	Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties to enforce these regulations? If yes, how? If no, please explain.	Yes we have a SAP database and we carry out mail outs to these properties.
24	Financial Support for Energy Efficiency	
25	What financial programmes, if any, do you have to promote domestic energy efficiency or energy saving? If applicable please outline the budget (and % of the budget that is used), where such funding is sourced and where it is targeted.	DCC's Warm Homes Campaign uses staff resources in Housing Solutions to promote domestic energy efficiency to owner occupier and private landlord properties. The budget is £10,000 per annum, we also have externally funded staff posts.
26	What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?	We are using the ECO/ ECO Flex and LAD funding programmes aligned with ECO phase 3 and planning will commence prior to launch of ECO 4.
	Fuel Poverty	
27	Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?	Yes
28	What steps have you taken to identify residents/properties in fuel poverty? What blockers, if any, have there been in identifying households in fuel poverty?	We have a SAP and fuel poverty database that used bulk updates from Energy Performance Certificates. Blockers have been identifying proximity to mains gas and complicated assessments using the Low-Income High Cost fuel poverty definition. Covid has reduced door to door promotions and uptake of fuel poverty grants.
29	How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall Carbon Reduction Strategy?	Buildings and Heat are a priority area in the Climate Emergency Response Plan. Within this there are 7 projects within the Action Plan which are contributing to the Authorities efforts to reduce fuel poverty and mitigate climate change.
30	Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area.	Rural areas of County Durham are not connected to mains gas and therefore reliant on high cost heating fuels. In addition, there are a significant number of solid wall dwellings that are expensive to insulate with solid wall insulation.

31	What measures or initiatives have you taken to promote fuel cost reduction for those in fuel poverty? Include information on partnerships with local businesses or energy providers you have.	DCC has the Managing Money Better service that provides free and impartial advice to obtain a more competitive energy tariff, switching supplier and fuel debt write off. We are working with EON Energy to deliver our Warm Homes Fund central heating project.
	Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery	
32	Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD? If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project.	Yes LAD Phase 1A, 1B and planning is taking place for LAD2 LAD funding will be used to install solid wall insulation, air source heat pumps and Solar Photo Voltaic panels.
33	If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from participation in the scheme.	N/A
34	Would your Local Authority be in a position to manage the delivery of upgrades through a scheme such as LAD in 2022? If yes, please indicate the anticipated number of homes that could be upgraded per year.	Yes 500 homes.
35	If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area.	N/A
	The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)	
36	Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)	Yes
37	Please answer the following questions to help us to understand LA Flex delivery in more detail:	
38	How many declarations were issued for low income vulnerable households?	DCC issued 1,724 LA Flex Declarations overall
39	How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?	DCC issued 1,724 LA Flex Declarations overall
40	How many declarations were issued for in-fill?	None issued

41	What is the highest income cap published in your Sol?	£36,000 for households with cold related ill health. Normal ECO income criteria is £30,000.
42	If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given?	Cold Related Ill Health Criteria
43	Do you charge for declarations to be signed? If so, please state how much?	No charge. However we are looking into this possibility due to the workload involved in processing the Declarations
	Smart Metering	
44	Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.	Our Managing Money Better Service provides assistance and advice to households to encourage the uptake of smart meters.
45	Please provide further information on activities relating to smart metering, including but not limited to: a. Integrating approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation b. Arranging for smart meters to be installed by energy suppliers in vacant social housing premises c. Using social landlords to promote smart meter uptake d. Including smart meters in landlord licencing schemes e. Supporting residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons f. Other supporting activities	Our Managing Money Better Service provides assistance and advice to households to encourage the uptake of smart meters when they receive advice on their energy bills.
	Future Schemes and Wider Incentives	
46	Please outline any further schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve energy efficiency in residential accommodation.	LAD 2 and 3 funded projects and planning for roll out of ECO Phase 4.