

Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Report 2021 questions

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995 requires local authorities to publish a report outlining their plans to promote improved energy efficiency of residential accommodation in their areas every two years. The data submitted is used by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to track energy efficiency related activity at a local level and inform policy thinking on energy efficiency and fuel poverty alleviation at both a local and national level.

For 2019 BEIS piloted the submission of reports through a digital platform with a streamlined set of questions. The responses to these questions for 2021 are set out below. The questions capture information on the councils' current and planned approaches to a range of key issues including, the Private Rental Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES), financial support for energy efficiency, fuel poverty and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding scheme.

Work to improve residential energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty is overseen by the Private Sector Housing Team, while broader work to address climate change and corporate energy saving is undertaken by the Insight and Policy Team. Most of the councils' work on energy efficiency and fuel poverty is undertaken in collaboration with neighbouring local authorities and partners through the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Network. The network places a strong emphasis on securing external funding to help vulnerable residents install energy saving improvements in their homes.

South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils questionnaire responses

Introductory questions:	
Name of Local Authority:	South Oxfordshire District Council Vale of White Horse District Council
Type of Local Authority:	District Council
Name, job title and contact details of official submitting the report:	Cynthia Calvert Private Sector Housing Team Leader cynthia.calvert@southandvale.gov.uk
Headline and overview:	
Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties?	(Y/N) N
If yes, please provide a link to your current strategy here:	N/A
If no, are you planning to develop one?	(Y/N) Y

	<p>As part of the climate action plan; there will also be a renewed carbon management plan being developed soon.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>The council is and will continue to be a member of the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Steering Group and provides funding annually. In line with NICE guidelines on excess winter deaths the group established Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) – a one-stop health and housing advice service. BHBH provides support to households at risk of fuel poverty and the health effects of cold homes. BHBH provides links to ECO and other funding for energy saving home improvements, home energy advice visits, direct referrals to support organisations, financial and debt advice, and training for frontline staff.</p> <p>The council provides and will continue to provide grants of up to £2,000 (increased from £1,000) to enable vulnerable households make essential energy saving repairs and improvements to their homes or to top up shortfalls in ECO or other external grant funding.</p> <p>The council will continue to ensure residents can benefit from external funding by publishing an ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent and issuing declarations.</p> <p>The council is part of Oxfordshire consortium projects funded under phases 1b and 2 of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHG LAD) scheme.</p> <p>Under GHG LAD phase 1B the council plans to continue the park home insulation project started under ECO2t in 2018. The scheme will offer average grants of £10,000 to park home residents with a household income of less than £30,000 for external wall insulation. Grants will initially be offered to residents of the council owned mobile home parks but depending on take up the offer may be expanded to residents of other mobile home parks or residents whose homes have solid walls.</p> <p>Under GHG LAD phase 2 the council plans to offer average grants of £10,000 to residents with a household income of less than £30,000 and whose homes have an EPC rating of D or below. The measures to be funded include insulation, glazing and heating improvements, but not solid wall insulation to avoid overlap with GHG LAD phase 1B.</p> <p>The council also plans to work with neighbouring authorities in the county to participate in GHG LAD phase 3 and the Home Upgrade Grant schemes.</p> <p>Currently there is scoping being conducted of the retrofit landscape to determine how to progress with this work in future.</p>
<p>What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and</p>	<p>South:</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>In addition to officer time, in 2019/20 and 2020/21 South Oxfordshire District Council spent:</p> <p>Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Steering Group and Better Housing Better Health service: £7,000 p.a. (£14,000 in total)</p> <p>Fuel poverty grants budget: £15,000 p.a. (£30,000 in total) (including NEF management fee)</p> <p>Vale:</p> <p>In addition to officer time, in 2019/20 and 2020/21 Vale of White Horse District Council spent:</p> <p>Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Steering Group and Better Housing Better Health service: £7,000 p.a. (£14,000 in total)</p> <p>Fuel poverty grants budget: £10,000 p.a. (£20,000 in total) (including NEF management fee)</p>
<p>What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?</p>	<p>The council works with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) to deliver the Better Housing Better Health service and its fuel poverty grant scheme. NEF also oversee the county-wide ECO Flexible Eligibility process.</p> <p>The council works with the other members of the Oxfordshire Affordable Warmth Steering Group including other local authorities and agencies, Age UK and Citizens Advice.</p> <p>We are working with key partners in our scoping of the retrofit landscape, including Cosy Homes Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire LEP and the Greater South East Energy Hub.</p> <p>The council also lends thermal imaging camera to local community groups.</p>
<p>What has been the outcome of the scheme(s) (e.g. energy savings, carbon savings, economic impacts such as job creation and/or increased business competitiveness, societal impacts such as alleviation of fuel poverty and/or improved health outcomes etc.)?</p>	<p>South:</p> <p>Between 2019-20 and 2020-21, South Oxfordshire District Council awarded fuel poverty grants worth £14,963.64, to 15 households for nine heating improvements and seven insulation improvements.</p> <p>During 2020-21, the council issued ECO flexible eligibility declarations for 114 households resulting in 5 heating improvements and 126 insulation improvements.</p> <p>The Better Housing Better Health service delivered 57 measures/interventions worth £38,800, resulting in energy savings of £34,437 and carbon savings of 153,850 kgCO₂.</p> <p>The council is part of the Oxfordshire consortium awarded £1.5m under phase 1B of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHG LAD) scheme. The scheme should deliver solid wall insulation improvements to approximately 30 low income households based on average grant of £10k per property.</p>

	<p>The council is part of the Oxfordshire consortium allocated up to £2m under GHG LAD phase 2. The scheme is expected to deliver energy efficiency improvements to approximately 36 low income households based on an average grant of £10k.</p> <p>Vale:</p> <p>Between 2019-20 and 2020-21, Vale of White District Council awarded fuel poverty grants worth £22,133.56, to 17 households for 14 heating improvements and six insulation improvements.</p> <p>During 2020-21, the council issued ECO flexible eligibility declarations for 82 households resulting in three heating improvements and 93 insulation improvements.</p> <p>The Better Housing Better Health service delivered 65 measures/interventions worth £52,038, resulting in energy savings of £43,853 and carbon savings of 205,248 kgCO₂.</p> <p>The council is part of the Oxfordshire consortium awarded £1.5m under phase 1B of the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery (GHG LAD) scheme. The scheme should deliver solid wall insulation improvements to approximately 30 low income households based on an average grant of £10k per property.</p> <p>The council is part of the Oxfordshire consortium allocated up to £2m under GHG LAD phase 2. The scheme is expected to deliver energy efficiency improvements to approximately 33 low income households based on an average grant of £10k.</p>
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Communications

<p>Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy?</p>	<p>(Y/N) Y</p>
<p>If yes to question 10, please briefly outline how this is undertaken (or enter 'N/A' if appropriate)</p>	<p>Advice on how to save energy is offered to householders who contact or are referred to Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) via the email or telephone helpline. Those who qualify are also offered a free home energy advice visit from (Local Energy Advice Partnership) LEAP.</p>
<p>How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses?</p>	<p>Projects, schemes and services are promoted to residents through the councils' websites, press releases, social media accounts (Twitter and Facebook), targeted mailings, town and parish council e-newsletters, resident e-newsletters.</p> <p>Increasingly communication is undertaken through the internet and social media in particular. NEF prepare a marketing and social media plan for the Better Housing Better Health service at the beginning of each year and the</p>

	council will support and re-post messages throughout the year guided by this plan.
Local Green Supply Chain	
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.	EK - Yes – we are currently undertaking analysis of our supply chains and speaking with key partners across the district about all aspects of the retrofit landscape.
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	EK - We are currently in discussions about how to address green skills and the local energy efficiency supply chain.
What actions are you taking, if any, to promote energy efficiency and the installer supply chain to consumers, and encourage households to consider energy retrofit?	EK - We are currently in discussion on how to address this, and communications will be key to promoting energy efficiency measures in buildings.
If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.	EK – N/A
How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?	EK - Finding lists of relevant installers is harder to come by, however, we have partners that have good contact with this group.
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?	EK - Yes – we are developing a climate action plan which will address the need to improve the energy efficiency of homes and non-domestic buildings. We are also currently scoping out the retrofit landscape to determine next steps for supporting this work.
Social Housing	
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?	N/A – the council does not own any housing stock so would expect housing associations to take action to install energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures in their housing stock and is not aware of the actions taken by social housing partners.

<p>What actions (if any) have your social housing partners taken?</p>	
<p>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)</p>	<p>(Y/N) N</p>
<p>If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?</p>	<p>The council does not own any housing stock and therefore does not hold information on social housing stock in the district. Information on social housing stock would be held by local housing associations. This information is not readily available to the council but may be available if requested from the various housing associations and they were willing to share the information requested.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Retrofitting of social housing would be undertaken by social housing landlords so the council has no direct experience of challenges to retrofitting social housing in particular.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>Retrofitting of social housing would be undertaken by social housing landlords so the council would not identify social housing stock for retrofitting. If the council were required to identify housing stock for retrofitting (regardless of tenure) we would use EPC data, fuel poverty data, gas network coverage mapping, energy consumption data, council GIS databases and local knowledge of housing stock.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>The council would expect social housing landlords to apply for government funding for the purpose of retrofitting social housing so is unable to comment on their opinion. However, from the council's perspective: advanced notice of funding, sufficient time to apply (including allowing time for decision making process/approval by managers/councillors), straightforward application forms and flexibility to design a scheme to fit local requirements and priorities would all make the council more likely to apply for funding. Support and</p>

	guidance for local authorities with limited experience of procurement and contracts would also be welcomed.
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?	N/A – the council does not own any housing stock so is unable to comment on social housing tenants’ willingness to undergo retrofit specifically.
Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks? What encourages them to co-operate?	The council so far does not have any experience of this issue.
Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards	
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?	(Y/N) Y
Which team within your authority is responsible for, or will be responsible for, leading on enforcement of the PRS minimum standard?	Private Sector Housing Team (Housing Needs)
Please provide the contact details of the person leading this team.	Cynthia Calvert cynthia.calvert@southandvale.gov.uk
What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?	No proactive communication about the standards and other related issues has been undertaken to date. The council is planning to adopt a new housing enforcement and civil penalty policy. The new policy will enable the council to issue financial (civil) penalties to landlords/letting agents in breach of the standards. The council will promote the new policy when it is in place.
What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords,	The regulations only apply to properties which legally require EPCs and the complex rules around EPCs make it hard to establish which properties are legally required to have EPCs.

<p>budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?</p>	<p>The complex rules around exemptions from the regulations also makes it hard to establish where valid exemptions apply.</p>
<p>Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties? If yes, how? If no, please explain.</p>	<p>(Y/N) N The team has not yet proactively targeted landlords of EPC F and G rated properties and instead has dealt cases as and when they have been made aware of them. If resources permit the team may take a more proactive approach in future.</p>

Financial Support for Energy Efficiency

<p>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.</p>	<p>The councils provide grants of up to £2,000 to enable vulnerable households make essential energy saving repairs and improvements to their homes or to top up shortfalls in ECO funding. South Oxfordshire District Council has an annual budget of £15,000 and Vale of White Horse District Council has an annual budget of £10,000 and both are taken from the councils' capital grants budgets as part of the council's housing assistance grants policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.</p> <p>Grants are available to homeowners and private renting tenants who receive benefits or are in fuel poverty (according to the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) fuel poverty calculator). In cases where the grant is used to top up ECO funding then applicants must either meet ECO criteria or council's ECO Flex Statements of Intent (Sol) criteria.</p>
<p>What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?</p>	<p>The council intends to continue to provide fuel poverty grants for as long as the current discretionary grant policy remains in place and the grant budget permits.</p>

Fuel poverty

<p>Does your local authority have a fuel poverty strategy?</p>	<p>(Y/N) N</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>The councils will use benefits data as a proxy for low income/fuel poverty and will work with their revenues and benefits contractor to use data to carry out targeted mailings to households who meet the benefits-based qualifying criteria for assistance schemes.</p> <p>The councils use the annual fuel poverty indicator data published by the Government to track fuel poverty by LSOA.</p> <p>Other available data is also mapped to help identify factors contributing to fuel poverty including electricity consumption, gas consumption, solid walls etc. Mapping is carried out by Data Analyst employed by councils to provide the county-</p>

	<p>wide District Data Service. Mapped data is also available from Local Insight - an online data, analysis and mapping tool that the councils subscribe to.</p> <p>The complex low-income high-cost definition of fuel poverty made it hard to determine if a household met the Government definition of fuel poverty so proxies such as benefit data had to be used as alternatives. The new indicator based on income and EPC should help address this blocker although EPC data can be unreliable, inaccurate and based on assumptions.</p>
<p>How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall carbon reduction strategy?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area</p>	<p>There are many older 'hard to treat' properties with solid walls that are expensive and difficult to insulate. Typically, there has been limited funding for solid wall insulation. Furthermore, many of these properties are listed buildings and/or are buildings in conservation areas making so the changes that can be made to the fabric of these buildings are limited. There are also many properties that are not connected to the gas network and occupiers are forced to use more expensive heating fuels such as oil and electricity. Whilst levels of deprivation across the district are relatively low, the high cost of housing combined with high heating costs mean there are pockets of low income and vulnerable households in fuel poverty which can be hard to identify.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Residents who contact the Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) service will be offered advice on switching energy suppliers or energy tariffs. For residents who qualify for free home energy advice visits, LEAP will check if a resident is on the best energy tariff and will help them to find and switch to a better deal if not.</p> <p>The councils work with the Local Energy Advice Partnership (LEAP) to provide eligible residents with free home energy advice visits where they check if a resident is on the best energy tariff and will help them to find and switch to a better deal if not.</p>

Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery

<p>Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD?</p> <p>If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project.</p> <p>If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>GHG LAD phase 1B: Average grants of £10,000 for external solid wall insulation for residents of park homes and dwellings (EPC D or below) whose annual household income is less than £30,000. The project is ongoing and aims to deliver improvements to approximately 30 properties.</p> <p>GHG LAD phase 2: Average grant of £10,000 for various energy efficiency measures (excluding solid wall insulation to</p>
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<p>participation in the scheme</p>	<p>avoid overlap with phase 1B). The project is due to start in the next few weeks and aims to deliver improvements to approximately 36 (S) /33 (V) households with EPC D or below and an annual income of less than £30,000.</p>
<p>Would your Local Authority be in a position to manage the delivery of upgrades through a scheme such as LAD in 2022?</p> <p>If yes, please indicate the anticipated number of homes that could be upgraded per year.</p> <p>If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area</p>	<p>Yes.</p> <p>The council would want to join any county-wide consortium bid to GHG LAD3 or HUG but would not act as a lead authority on any bid and would require support from a managing agent to deliver any scheme. It is difficult to anticipate the number of properties that could be upgraded as the council holds limited local information on housing stock so would be reliant upon national data sets (i.e. EPC data) to identify properties to upgrade. The number of upgrades that could be delivered would also largely depend on the value of any grant funding and contractor availability.</p>
<p>The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)</p>	
<p>Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility?</p> <p>If yes, please include a link to your Sol below.</p>	<p>(Y/N) Y</p> <p>South: http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/services-and-advice/housing/managing-your-home/improving-energy-efficiency/energy-saving-grants</p> <p>Vale: http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/housing/managing-your-home/improving-energy-efficiency/energy-saving-grants</p>
<p>How many declarations were issued for low income vulnerable households?</p>	<p>South: 114</p> <p>Vale: 82</p>
<p>How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?</p>	<p>South: 0</p> <p>Vale: 0</p>
<p>How many declarations were issued for in-fill?</p>	<p>South: 0</p> <p>Vale: 0</p>
<p>What's the highest income cap published in your Sol?</p>	<p>£45,750</p>
<p>If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given?</p>	<p>Income caps over £30,000 only apply to larger households so are used infrequently. Income caps over £30,000 apply to households of at least of 2 adults and 2 or more children to reflect increased living costs incurred by larger households.</p> <p>The income (and other) criteria in the Sol were agreed by the all the district councils in the county in conjunction with NEF so that the qualifying criteria were consistent across the county. The income thresholds were based on tax credits</p>

	and universal credit thresholds at the time and increased by 25 per cent to reflect the local high cost of housing.
Do you charge for declarations to be signed? If so, please state how much?	NEF manage and administer the ECO Flex application process on behalf of the councils in Oxfordshire. NEF charges a fee to the requesting installer of £65+VAT per declaration to cover their costs.
Smart metering	
Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.	The council has not adopted a formal approach to promoting the take up of smart meters.
<p>Please provide further information on activities relating to smart metering, including but not limited to:</p> <p>Integrating approaches to delivering energy efficiency improvements in residential accommodation.</p> <p>Arranging for smart meters to be installed by energy suppliers in vacant social housing premises.</p> <p>Using social landlords to promote smart meter uptake.</p> <p>Including smart meters in landlord licensing schemes.</p> <p>Supporting residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons.</p> <p>Other supporting activities.</p>	<p>Currently neither council has adopted a formal approach to promoting the uptake and installation of smart meters amongst residents or social landlords.</p> <p>Smart meters do not form part of the council's house in multiple occupation (HMO) licensing conditions however, the council does not permit the installation of pre-payment (top-up) energy meters in HMOs.</p> <p>Both councils provide grants of up to £2,000 for essential energy saving repairs and improvements which could be used to support residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons. Where these works are the normal, legal responsibility of landlords they would be expected to carry these out.</p>
Future schemes and wider initiatives	
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.	<p>The Oxfordshire Energy Strategy, produced by the Local Enterprise Partnership, is fully-aligned to both the UK Industrial Strategy and the Clean Growth Strategy. The delivery plan for the strategy is currently under development. The strategy's objectives include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secure a smart, modern, clean energy infrastructure – including increased electricity grid capacity. 2. Lead nationally and internationally to reduce countywide emissions by 50% compared with 2008 levels by 2030 and set a pathway to achieve zero carbon growth by 2050.

3. Support ambitious and innovative clean generation projects across the county, both in urban and rural areas, and in growth locations.

4. Support projects that reduce energy demand and increase energy efficiency for domestic, industrial, commercial buildings and transport energy.

5. Enhance energy networking and partnership working to date to focus on the low carbon energy challenges and funding arising from the Industrial Strategy and Clean Growth Strategy.

We are developing a climate action plan which will address the need to improve the energy efficiency of homes and non-domestic buildings. We are also currently scoping out the retrofit landscape to determine next steps for supporting this work.