**Home Energy Conservation Act Report 2021**

The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA) requires all local authorities (LAs) 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 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 and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) uses data submitted through these returns to inform policy thinking on energy efficiency, and to build an ongoing picture of local and national energy efficiency policy delivery.

|  |
| --- |
| **Introductory questions** |
| 1.*Name of Local Authority*  Medway Council  2.*Type of Local Authority*  Unitary  3.*Name, job title and email address of official submitting the report*  Mark Breathwick  Head of Strategic Housing  Mark.Breathwick@Medway.Gov.Uk |
| **Headline and Overview** |
| 4. *Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties?*  Medway Council adopted the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (KMELES) in January 2021. The objective of the KMELES is to outline a joint Kent and Medway approach to achieving a reduction in carbon emissions and improvements in air quality, with an agreed Kent and Medway target of net-zero emissions by 2050. The KMELES provides the framework of a Medway Climate Change Action Plan, which is due to go to Cabinet in June 2021.    5. *If yes, please provide a link*    Please visit the following link to view the Action Plan: [www.medway.gov.uk/climatechange](http://www.medway.gov.uk/climatechange)  6. *If no, are you planning to develop one?*  N/A  7. *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?*  Medway Council has engaged with LA Flex/ ECO scheme and will continue to promote to residents in the next iteration of the scheme.  Medway Council has also been looking into new initiatives such as Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) to maximise benefit for residents.  The Council has also implemented other schemes such as:   * Private Sector Housing which involves enforcement activity around excess cold * Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 1 * COVID Winter Food and Fuel Scheme * Kent Solar Together Scheme   8. *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?*  The full cost is not known at this stage; however, implementation of these schemes is likely to include percentage of LA time from the following areas:   * Energy Office * Finance * Procurement * Communications and marketing * Legal * Private Sector Housing   9. *What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?*  Medway Council is working closely with the following providers/stakeholders:   * SGN * ARAN Services * Medway Council Social services * IMAGO Kent * CCG/ Health Practitioners/Children and Adults Social Care/ Hospital Discharge Team   The Council will also be adding Green Doctors to the council website for clients to self-refer to energy saving advice.  10. *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?*  The full scale of the outcomes of these schemes will be determined ging forward, however, initial outcomes is listed below:   * Carbon Saving * Alleviation of fuel poverty * Improvements to people’s health, achieved through health referrals, energy deals and ECO Flex/LA Flex referrals |
| **Communications** |
| 11. *Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy?* *If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken.*  The Council ran promoted advice on energy efficiency during Energy Savings Week on social media and items have been added to the HRA tenant newsletter. Signposting to advice and tips is included in the HRA tenant handbook  Additionally, available information can be found on the below website: <https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200153/private_housing/93/kent_and_medway_warm_homes_scheme/1>  *12. How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses*  The Council has provided some home visits during this time, although, this has been impacted by Covid-19. The Private Sector Housing Team remains in contact with tenants and provides advice to tenants.  Additionally, advice has been provided on social media on how energy can be saved and how costs can be reduced.  The Council regularly attends Landlord Forum and is a part of KCH, which includes the Affordable Warmth Strategy.  Other channels of communication include:   * Updates to Simple Energy Advice website <https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200345/business-funding> * Kent Solar Together |
| **Local Green Supply Chain** |
| 13. *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.*    No  14. *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.*  No actions have currently taken place; however, the Skills and Employability Team have been looking into creating a flexible training fund available to businesses. If there is a need for bespoke training, this would require input and engagement from the industry.  15. *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?*  Kent Solar Together – Medway Council has worked with other Kent districts to support Kent Solar Together, a group buying scheme which enables residents and small businesses to install solar panels at a competitive price.  ECO Flex/SGN – The Council has also published a statement of intent as a commitment to the Energy Company Obligation (ECO Flex). This can be found here: <https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/5584/energy_company_obligation_eco>  Additionally, the Council has provided advice during the Energy Saving Week on social media and the HRA Newsletter.  16. *If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.*  N/A  17*. How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?*  Medway Council is working closely with Aran insulation on the ECO Flex Scheme, which holds a range of certifications, including Trustmark.  18. *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?*  A Climate Change communications and engagement strategy is currently being drafted to support the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan. It will set out how the Council intends to better communicate to our stakeholders on energy saving and renewable energy.  A medium-term action (by 2027) has been included in the draft Climate Change Action Plan to work with the Medway Skills and Employability Plan business partners to develop awareness of the net zero carbon ambition and identify low carbon employment opportunities and to address skills shortages. |
| **Social Housing** |
| 19. *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?*  Medway Council has implemented a programme to install A-rated boilers and installing 300mm of loft insulation. The boilers that are fitted, are the most energy efficient for gas, however, the Council recognises the carbon contribution of gas boilers. As an alternative, the Council is exploring installations of heat pumps, ground pumps, PV etc. The Council will make bids for funding this future work.  Furthermore, the Council has incorporated a section in the Housing Development Strategy - Achieving ambitious standards for energy efficiency. Medway Council will also consider Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) on a project-by-project basis. The aim is to deliver new development in the most sustainable and environmentally friendly way possible.  Registered Providers  For the Medway Council housing stock, the Council have introduced energy efficient measures, such as Cavity Wall Insulation (CWI), External Wall Insulation (EWI), Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP), Ground Source Heat Pumps (GSHP), High Heat Retention Storage Heaters (HHRSHs), A-rated gas boilers, solar PV, solar thermal, EV charging points and more energy efficient windows and doors etc.  In addition to this, the providers the Council has worked with, has delivered five Energiesprong homes in Essex where floors have been insulated, triple glazed windows and battery storage technology have been installed in addition to the more standard energy efficiency measures mentioned above.  Providers has been investing heavily in the energy performance of the housing stock by replacing current heating systems with new and more efficient boilers, replacing old storage heaters with high heat retaining storage heaters, providing loft insulation top ups, adding cavity wall insulations, and replacing windows and doors with more energy efficient ones. Over 80% of the housing stock has now got a Band C EPC rating.  Providers has worked with Orbit and Stratford on Avon District Council, to bid for, and been awarded, £1.45 million by the Government’s Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). This will be used to install sustainable technologies in a number of homes in Stratford. The Council is also investing a further £2.2 million into the project. This project has been furthered by collaborating with ‘Good Switch’ to secure lower rates for Orbit customers to switch to a low-cost green energy tariff.  Providers are in the final stages of completing cavity wall insulation and loft insulation. Some properties in the housing stock have been fitted with ASHP, PV and Solar Thermal Panels.  20. *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)*  There is detailed information available on social housing stock owned by LA to allow identification of harder to treat properties. However, more work needed to develop a programme of works to improve energy efficiency of these properties.  21. *If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?*  This information is yet to be determined as it is not known at this stage.  22. *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?*  N/A.  Registered Providers  There is some disruption caused by the length of time the works will take and the social housing partners require information around the cost of operating new systems, how user friendly they are and how reliable the new systems will be. The providers have experienced some challenges in implementing these changes, however, any advantages and disadvantages of the retrofit works have been highlighted. The Council values the customer journey and has emphasised the importance of resident liaison as well as providing information on available support, if needed.  Further challenges to retrofit is highlighted below:   * Access to properties continues to be a challenge * Planning restrictions increase timescales and costs * Shortages for “Green Skills” in the supply chain * Technology   23.  *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?*  Registered Providers  Providers has delivered Energiesprong homes in addition to regeneration projects of estates and upgrades of heating systems, windows, roofs and doors in blocks. They are identified by low EPC ratings, arrear status, repairs costs and feedback from other staff members and customers etc. Suitability of the stock normally depends on archetype and whether there are planned works scheduled in conjunction with the proposed works. The providers identify properties that are low performing and prioritise them as part of the planned capital investment works programme.  The Stratford decarbonisation programme focuses on properties that are EPC Band D or below.  Additionally, providers are looking into trials around this, and one alternative construction (Laings Easiform) Road have been identified for retrofit, with other similar roads of this construction located elsewhere in the housing stock (not within the Medway area) that could then replicate this trial. Some systems have been identified to support in analyse housing stock relating to energy data going forward, which in turn will support in future bids fir grant funding that becomes available.  24. *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?*  Deliverable/achievable timescales.  Registered Providers  The likelihood of applying for funding will depend on whether it is right for the properties and the tenants and it will need to fit in with other streams of work. Funding will need to be part of a long-term strategy and investment programme. There are 19 million homes across the country which would currently fail to reach Band C EPC ratings (minimum standard which all homes must meet by 2035) for The Council to reach the target of becoming carbon neutral by 2050 – and the estimated funding gap for the social housing sector alone is over £104 billion.  The in-house capacity and level of Government funding (match funding required) will also impact on The Council’s ability to deliver the works withing the specified timescale. The funding would be dependent on criteria and what interventions are allowed such as heat pumps and external wall insulation etc.  25. *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?*  Registered Providers  Covid 19 has been a huge challenge nationwide throughout the pandemic and lockdown restrictions and customers shielding has created barriers to retrofit. Other barriers include customers not wanting the disruption which can be caused by intrusive retrofit works such as new glazing and insulation.  Ongoing customer education and support is a key facilitator. The Council is working closely with tenants around this, and more work is planned over the next year.  6. *Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks? What encourages them to co-operate?*  N/A |
| **Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards** |
| 27. *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.  28. *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.*  Trading Standards – Ian Gilmore  Medway Council, Gun Wharf Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR. Tel: 01634 331191. Email: [ian.gilmore@medway.gov.uk](mailto:ian.gilmore@medway.gov.uk)  29. *What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?*  Medway Council communicate with landlords through the Landlord Forum and promotes the Enforcement Policy on [www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)  30. *What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords, budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?*  Medway Council has faced some challenges regarding resources. To ensure that this topic is addressed the relevant team operate a dual approach of proactively delivering a thematic project to conduct unannounced checks on the agents whilst also acting reactively to complaints that are made to the team.    It is commonly understood nationally within Trading Standards that there is an inherent lag in current EPCs where properties are long term tenancies, and the EPC reassessment liability does not become due until a change in tenant. Equally, Conservation Areas preclude the ability to upgrade the rating of certain properties in the area.  The team’s proactive themed project holistically addresses the issues with agents and not only covers the implementation of EPCs but also ensures that all applicable parties are on the registration scheme. This aims to ensure that a class of rogue agents/landlords do not opt out of the legislation regime and avoid the EPC system.    It should be noted that constrained resources dictate that Trading Standards aligns its workstreams to the areas of most risk and harm. This means that certain years will see the reduction of work in this stream to.  31. *Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties to enforce these regulations? If yes, how? If no, please explain.*  Yes, Medway Council’s Trading Standards team addresses the issue of EPC rated F and G properties in their proactive project that audits the properties held by Agents. This looks for compliance with both advertised properties and those which are held in the agent’s portfolio in historic tenancies. Moreover, the Trading Standards team investigate individual complaints from members of the public and referrals from other teams of non-compliance in EPC obligations.  In the 2020-2021 financial year, the Trading Standards team undertook 70 proactive full inspections to agents and responded to 7 complaints concerning EPCs. |
| **Financial Support for Energy Efficiency** |
| 32. *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.*  There is currently no financial budget or programme available in the reporting period 2019 to 2021 financial years. There is an available budget to promote key Climate Change action plan activities from 2021-2022. This is still in the budget planning phase and therefore no specific amount is allocated to promoting energy efficiency.  33. *What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?*  Medway Council is planning to implement several schemes around energy efficiency and low carbon heat measures; however, dates are yet to be confirmed for the commencement of the following schemes:     * Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) * Energy Company Obligation (ECO) * Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) * Allocation of Housing Grants * SGN (Gas connection for fuel poor households) – Help To Heat * Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 |
| **Fuel Poverty** |
| 34*. Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?*  Medway Council have adopted the Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy.  35. *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?*  The Council have taken the following steps to identify households in fuel poverty:   * Public Health mapping of vulnerable households * Data Lake project (PH, Revenue and Benefits): Identifying households who may need to shield and other vulnerable households   It should be mentioned that there is limited information on these households.  *36. How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority’s overall Carbon Reduction Strategy?*  The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets out a response to the climate emergency, to ensure recovery from the coronavirus pandemic reduces fuel poverty as well as driving a clean and resilient economic growth, eliminating poor air quality, and promoting the development of an affordable, clean and secure energy supply across Kent and Medway. One priority area is to develop a building retrofit programme, focusing on expanding and accelerating existing domestic energy efficiency and fuel poverty initiatives. Additionally, the Council is committed to developing a comprehensive Climate Change communications strategy which will include key messaging to help those in fuel poverty.  37. *Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area.*  Medway Council have experienced the following fuel poverty issues in the area:   * High proportion of private rented properties * High proportion of residents with limited English skills * Digital exclusion * The age of the housing stock * General levels of income and other indicators of social deprivation   38. *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.*  The Tenancy Sustainment Service has received a number of Income Maximisation referrals.  Additionally, the Council has provided Covid-19 support funds e.g., Winter Grants. |
| **Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery**  Of the £2bn Green Homes Grant scheme introduced in summer 2020, £500m was assigned for Local Authority Delivery (LAD). LAD enables Local Authorities to bid for grant funding to support low-income households in their area with energy efficiency and low carbon heating upgrades. £200m was made available through Local Authority grant competitions in 2020, known as phases 1A and 1B and £300m was allocated under Phase 2 between the five regional Local Energy Hubs. |
| *39. Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD? If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project. If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from participation in the scheme.*  N/A.  40*. 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. If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area.*  Should there be enough admin staff to support this and consistent reporting process to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Council would be able to manage the delivery of upgrades through government funded schemes. |
| **The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)**  The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Following the Spring 2018 consultation, the Government set out in its response that ECO3 will fully focus on Affordable Warmth – low income, vulnerable and fuel poor households. The ECO “Local Authority flexible eligibility” (LA Flex) programme allows LAs to make declarations determining that certain households in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the effects of cold homes, are referred to ECO obligated suppliers for support under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO. LAs involved in the LA Flex programme are required to issue a Statement of Intent that they are going to identify households as eligible, and the criteria they are going to use; and a declaration that the LA has been consulted on the installation of measures in a home. |
| 41. *Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (SoI) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)*  Yes.  42. *Please answer the following questions to help us to understand LA Flex delivery in more detail:*   * *How many declarations were issued for low-income vulnerable households?* 11 * *How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?* 11 * *How many declarations were issued for in-fill?* 0 * *What is the highest income cap published in your SoI?* £30,150.00 * *If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given?* In line with Kent Partnership, we agreed a Kent threshold over £37,000 to ensure consistency. * *Do you charge for declarations to be signed? If so, please state how much?* No |
| **Smart Metering** |
| 43. *Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.*  Medway Council does not currently have any actions in the action plan around smart metering, however general advice to energy and water consumption can be found on the Medway Council website, which highlights the use of smart meters as a way to reduce energy usage. <https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200348/climate_change/1494/energy_and_water_advice>  44*. 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*  N/A. |
| **Future Schemes and Wider Incentives** |
| 45. *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.*  N/A. |