

Home Energy Efficiency

Briefing note June 2020

This area of work sits within wider Sustainability activity as detailed in the Green Prospectus under the Buildings and Efficiencies Theme. The Home Energy Efficiency and Affordable Warmth Strategy (HEEAWS) builds on existing policies, practices and partnerships to maximise the potential for energy efficiency, low and zero carbon energy and provision of affordable warmth to residents in Solihull

<http://www.solihull.gov.uk/Portals/0/StrategiesPlansPolicies/Housing/EnergyandAffordableWarmthStrategy.pdf> .

The strategy has four linked objectives:

1. To improve the energy efficiency of domestic dwellings in Solihull and promote the use of appropriate low and zero carbon technologies that help to reduce carbon emissions.
2. To work towards a reduction in fuel poverty throughout the Borough.
3. To provide a range of support for residents and in particular vulnerable households and those on low income.
4. To support the emerging 'green economy' through investment in energy efficiency measures in new and existing housing and low and zero carbon technologies.

1. To improve the energy efficiency of domestic dwellings in Solihull and promote the use of appropriate low and zero carbon technologies that help to reduce carbon emissions.

Recent examples:

- SCH installed 163 new heating systems and boilers during 2019/20, including first time central heating systems delivered through the national Warm Homes Fund programme
- Heating solution for 5 high rise blocks – SCH has identified a preferred option of ground source heat pumps to replace the existing electric storage heating. This will improve home comfort levels for tenants and significantly reduce carbon emissions. Detailed feasibility studies are due for completion in summer 2020.
- Initial feasibility studies have been completed, with a preferred option of Ground source heat pumps. However the options now require further review and update in the context of other emerging and linked investment needs in all high rise dwellings. These are being driven by changes in high rise building safety and compliance requirements.
- SCH has identified those homes that currently have the lowest energy ratings and is currently in the process of identifying those works required to improve energy performance. In many cases this will involve upgrading existing older and less efficient heating systems.
- SCH has upgraded a number of heating systems in properties with the lowest energy ratings. As part of the new Low Carbon Energy Framework, the Council and SCH intend to commission a full reassessment of the energy performance of the Council's housing stock. This will not only identify the poorest performing properties but also set out a new trajectory for achieving net zero in the Council's housing stock
- SCH are planning to install external wall insulation to around 100 solid wall homes during 2020/21

- SCH will be building a small scheme of low carbon and highly energy efficient bungalows in Solihull, incorporating a super insulated fabric and renewable technologies. The scheme is due for completion in mid-2021

2. To work towards a reduction in fuel poverty throughout the Borough

2.1 What is fuel poverty?

Fuel poverty is caused by a combination of ‘property’ factors (including expensive heating systems and poor insulation) and ‘people’ factors (such as age and income).

2.2 Fuel Poverty definition:

In England, the definition of fuel poverty was changed following the Hills Review (Department of Energy and Climate Change 2012). Someone is now said to be in fuel poverty using the Low Income High Cost (LIHC) definition if heating their home adequately costs more than average and paying the bill would leave them below the official poverty line.)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/fuel-poverty-factsheet-2020>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2020>

2.3 Fuel Poverty in Solihull

The latest fuel poverty figures published 30 April 2020 (for March 2018) suggest that there were 7,428 (8.2%) fuel poor households in Solihull, a reduction from 8,315 (9.2%) in March 2017. The average fuel poverty figure across the West Midlands authorities is 11.4% showing a reduction from 12.6% in 2017.

In 2018, the **average fuel poverty gap** (the reduction in fuel bill that the average fuel poor household needs in order to not be classed as fuel poor) in England was estimated at £334, a slight increase from £328 in 2017.

- The **aggregate fuel poverty gap** for England continued to decrease in 2018 (by 3.4 per cent in real terms) to £802 million.
- The **proportion of households in England** in fuel poverty was estimated to have decreased by 0.7 percentage points from 2017 to 10.3 per cent in 2018 (approximately 2.40 million households).

The Fuel Poverty data is collected by Government and released annually using modelled data from the English Housing Survey (EHS). The EHS is an annual national survey of people’s housing circumstances, household income and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England. It is commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), covers all tenures (private and social) and involves a detailed physical inspection of properties by professional surveyors.

2.4 Fuel Poverty Targets

The Government’s Fuel Poverty target is; *To ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy standard (Energy Performance Certificate rating) of Band ‘C’ by 2030.*

Interim Targets have been set in order to assess progress and these are:

- To ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy standard of Band 'E' by 2020
- To ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy standard of Band 'D' by 2025

In 2018, further progress was made towards the interim 2020 **fuel poverty target**, with 92.6 per cent of all fuel poor households living in a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of Band E or better.

The fuel poverty indicator is a relative measure and as a result at the national level the proportion of households in fuel poverty remains, on the whole, stable over time (between 10-12%).

Recent Examples:

- Solihull Switch and Save – 4777 switchers saving £1.3m from energy bills and net £40k in referral fees for SMBC.
- Since the latest energy auction in February 2020, the Solihull Switch and Save scheme will now only consider offers from energy companies who provide their customers with 100% green electricity. As well as energy bill saving and providing a small income to the Council, we can now also state that we are working to reduce CO2 emissions from domestic energy use. As a result of the February auction 445 switchers saved on average £323 per year on their energy bills, and collectively 528 Tonnes of CO2.
- Winter Warmth campaign management with AgeUK helping over 200 residents per year and accessing 4000 households. Financial support secured for residents in 2019/20 from switching and Warm Homes Discount applications estimated at £42k.
- Energy efficiency advice training for partners including SCH via Act on Energy
- Smart Meters information advice available via Council and SCH websites including helpful short videos.E
- Energy Angels void management system developed with SCH has realised savings for SCH of over £13,600 and saved new tenant's £27,495 since January 2019.
- Act on Energy advice drop in sessions supported by Connect, Income and Awards and GP surgeries
- Free loft and cavity Wall insulation to vulnerable residents and those on low incomes utilising Eco Flex Statement of Intent (£109k).
- May 2019 submission of the Home Energy Conservation Act bi-annual report to BEIS. Summary report available here [Housing strategies](#)

3. To provide a range of support for residents and in particular vulnerable households and those on low income.

Recent Examples:

- Independent advice available to all residents via Act on Energy (3 year SLA in place). Advice sessions being held in Connect walk in centres and Job Centres.
- Discussions with Trading Standards and Public Protection around new Private Sector minimum energy standards and support via act on Energy for landlords.

- Successful Warm Homes Funding bid to National Grid funding August 2018. This will support the installation of first time gas central heating systems. Processes for delivery now in place and 66 installations have been completed to date.
- 100 Free Carbon Monoxide Detectors (from Cadent) being distributed to older vulnerable residents via AgeUK as part of Winter Warmth assessment visits.
- Emergency Central Heating Offer (ECHO) funding secured for broken boilers in 2019/2020 to support vulnerable residents over the winter months.

4. To support the emerging 'green economy' through investment in energy efficiency measures in new and existing housing and low and zero carbon technologies

Recent Examples:

- Work with Sustainable Housing Partnership (SHAP) to develop energy efficiency standards in new housing and retrofitting existing homes.
- Minimum energy standards in Private Sector housing support available for landlords and private tenants via Act on Energy.
- Work with SHAP and the West Midlands Combined Authority to address fuel poverty and provide support/ knowledge for a redesign of ECO including the development of pilot projects to inform potential design of ECO 4. A number of Task and Finish Groups have been established to drive this forward with officer representation from SMBC.

5. Funding available

- SCH Capital Programme – energy efficiency allocation annually
- Energy Company Obligation - £680m per annum until 2022. Focus is on fuel poverty and low cost measures e.g. Loft insulation, Cavity Wall insulation
- Redress funding via Energy Saving Trust to Charity partners– as and when available <https://energyredress.org.uk/about-us>
- National Grid, Warm Homes Fund for electricity to gas heating.
- Public Health Winter Warmth support to be discussed prior to each winter period.

6. Emerging Issues

- WMCA are recruiting staff to support the Fuel Poverty Group and to further develop potential pilot projects.
- SCH redrafted Asset Management Strategy – Whilst the objectives of the current strategy remain relevant there is a need to review it in light of emerging issues, particularly around the safety of homes.
- Act on Energy and AgeUK Solihull have been successful in their respective applications for Redress funding to enhance provision of one to one support for vulnerable residents in Solihull and support for the annual winter warmth campaign. (applications from charities only).
- Act on Energy have applied for Redress funding to provide Fuel Vouchers for low income households.
- Proposed SHAP new build design standards.
- Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation September 2019. Main changes proposed are:
 - ❖ Move from Low Income High cost to Low Income Low Energy Efficiency model
 - ❖ Include 'D' rated dwellings (increasing fuel poverty figures by approx. 1m)
- SMBC replied to the consultation on line and were party to submissions by Sustainable Housing Action Plan (SHAP) and the Association of Local Government Officers (ALEO).