



## St Helens Council – HECA Progress Report - 2021

### Introduction

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.

### HECA 2021 Reporting Requirements

The reporting template is divided into sections of structured questions to capture information on a range of key themes:

- **Headline & Overview**

The main strategies LAs have to promote carbon reduction and energy efficiency, the stakeholders they work with and the impact these strategies have.

- **Communication**

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

- **Green Local Supply Chain**

How LAs assess the capacity of local supply chains that support home retrofit and energy saving measures and how LAs are planning to grow this capacity.

- **Social Housing**

Measures LAs have taken to improve the energy efficiency of Social Housing.

- **Private Rental Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards**

How LAs enforce and promote awareness of the PRS Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards<sup>2</sup> 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.

- Green Homes Grant: Local Authority Delivery

How LAs have interacted with the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme.

- The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

How LAs are using ECO to help those in fuel poor households.

- Smart Metering

How LAs promote awareness and uptake of smart metering

## St Helens Borough Council - HECA Report 2021 Question Responses

### Headline & Overview

- Name of Local Authority

St Helens Borough Council

- Type of Local Authority

Metropolitan Borough Council

- Name, job title and email address of official submitting report

Chris Birkett

Affordable Warmth Project Officer

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- Does your Local Authority have a current strategy on carbon reduction and/or energy efficiency for domestic or non-domestic properties?

St Helens Borough Council currently has a fuel poverty strategy which includes for the delivery of energy efficiency measures on domestic properties.

A Climate Change Commission for St Helens was formally established in March 2021. St Helens is seeking to rise to the ambitious challenge of gaining zero carbon status by 2040. A top priority is tackling climate change and creating a prosperous, sustainable economy. The Commission will produce a 5-year Climate Change Strategy for the borough of St Helens.

- If yes, please provide a link

<https://www.sthelens.gov.uk/housing/energy-efficiency/sthelens-council-home-energy-conservation-act-heca-report/>

- If no, are you planning to develop one

N/A

- 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?

St. Helens Council will continue to provide the Affordable Warmth Outreach Services that will enable residents to access funding to deliver significant improvements in energy efficiency. The provision of face to face advice will provide a platform from which we can continue to provide initiatives using the Council's Housing Capital funds and where possible maximise funding opportunities available from various sources such as ECO, Warm Homes Fund, Green Homes Grant - Local Authority Delivery schemes etc...

We will also continue to encourage our local registered providers to implement energy efficiency measures in their properties promoting funding opportunities when available e.g. Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)

- 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.

2020/21 - Affordable Warmth Team Revenue Costs - £98k  
Capital (grant schemes) - £144K

2021/22 - Affordable Warmth Team Revenue Costs - £98k  
Capital (grant schemes) - £275K

- What businesses, charities, third sector organisations or other stakeholders do you work with to deliver the scheme(s)?

St Helens Borough Council maintains a strong emphasis on partnership work and the benefits this can have on improving energy efficiency and reducing the effects of Fuel Poverty. The Council continues to work with a broad range of local and national partners many of which attend the St Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group. The focus group is used to promote affordable warmth/energy efficiency schemes and strengthens referral pathways. This ensures that we are supporting our most vulnerable residents with advice and energy saving improvements. Examples of our stakeholders include:

Age UK Mid Mersey

EPP

Foundations

Rhea Projects Ltd

Registered Providers

NEA

Citizens Advice St Helens

Association of Local Energy Officers

- 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.

From April 2019 to March 2021 the outcomes of schemes in the borough include:

Heating scheme - 159 households have benefitted from high efficiency boiler replacements.

- 21 properties have benefitted from First Time Central Heating.

Insulation Scheme - 33 households were assisted with 38 insulation measures. Estimated reduction in carbon emissions 13,990 KgCO<sub>2</sub>/Year\*

(\*Energy Saving Trust - Estimates based on a gas-heated home.)

Private Housing Initiatives Emergency Fund – provides assistance with small but essential measures - 353 interventions.

Advice provided to the Council's Adaptations delivery service to maximise fuel poverty reduction measures within adaptations schemes for disabled and vulnerable householders (Disabled Facilities Grants).

Save Energy Advice Line – Received 2189 calls to assist with:

- Warm Home Discount campaign – 1,428 households assisted to apply giving discounts on electricity bills of £199,920.00
- Collective Energy Switching Scheme
- General advice

St Helens Winter Warmer Campaigns - distribution of 4,500 Winter Warmer Packs in 2019/20 and close to 10,000 Winter Warmer Calendars in 2020/21.

All schemes can provide improvements to health; reduce the impacts of fuel poverty and also reduce excess winter mortality/morbidity

## Communications

- Does your Local Authority provide any advisory services to customers on how to save energy?

Yes

- If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken.

Affordable Warmth Outreach Officers provide advice to residents on ways to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel bills and support clients to access a variety of schemes. This staffing resource is essential in the delivery of the Council's capital programme improvement works including the maximisation of external funding/grant resources.

In addition to the Affordable Warmth Outreach work St Helens Council commission Energy Projects Plus, a local environmental charity, to provide the Save Energy Advice Line (SEAL) a phone line which is staffed by experienced advisers who have qualifications in energy efficiency advice, renewable energy technologies, customer care standards and up-to-date knowledge of the range of schemes available to residents whatever their personal circumstances. The team is available to support domestic residents requesting assistance through various contact methods including telephone, email, web and social media.

- How do you communicate or encourage energy saving amongst domestic consumers and/or local businesses?

Information is promoted using local media, the Council's website, promotion through our local partners via the St Helens Fuel Poverty Focus Group, or via direct targeting through leaflet drops or mail outs. St Helens Annual Winter Warmer scheme also promotes the availability of energy efficiency assistance throughout the winter. During the winter period of the Coronavirus pandemic a Winter Warmer Calendar was sent to our most vulnerable residents, the calendars contained useful information for people to stay safe, warm, and well throughout the winter months including details of where and how to access all the support available via the Affordable Warmth Outreach team and wider support available.

## Green Local 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.

The Liverpool City Region Combined Authority have recently undertaken a survey of locally based Trustmark registered installers. There are currently 67 Trustmark registered companies in the LCR region. 11 Companies responded to the survey, summary of outcomes below:

- All businesses stated that they do have the capacity to expand. This demonstrates the potential of further jobs in the LCR relating to retrofit in the future.
- 91% of businesses who responded train staff in house.
- 73% subcontract to other companies to work under their Trustmark accreditation.
- 63% currently work with retrofit assessors, with the rest working towards.

- 64% of businesses wish to offer other energy efficiency measures in the future, in addition to what they currently install.

- 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.

St Helens Borough Council are working with the LCR combined Authority and the Local Energy Hub Northwest to produce a retrofit framework which will include a range of retrofit services to assist with the delivery of future schemes including LAD.

The Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme was also promoted via the local chamber of commerce, St Helens Chamber, to encourage local installers to work on the scheme.

- 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?

St Helens Borough Council used local energy efficiency data to undertake a targeted promotion of the Green Homes Grant Voucher scheme to properties in the borough that would benefit most from energy efficiency improvements. Blanket marketing of the scheme was also undertaken using local media and the Council's social media platforms.

- If no action is taking place in either of these two areas, please let us know of any barriers you have encountered.

The survey undertaken by the LCR combined Authority included the following question - What do you consider to be the main shortfalls / weaknesses, if any, of the Green Homes Grant Voucher Scheme? The responses to this question give insight into the potential barriers for future retrofit schemes:

- Communication is really poor with the scheme administrator; vouchers are taking far too long to issue and redeem.
- The scheme is very heavily front loaded financially, which is causing a lot of unrest within the industry. Overly complicated for small businesses to navigate the procedures that will cause businesses to be penalised down the line.
- No clear guidance on pricing or payment.
- Lack of affordable training made available for small businesses Lack of communication with installers, we cannot talk to the people that deal with voucher applications or issues with voucher redemption. Not getting paid on time massively reduces cash flow for businesses.
- The certification process for a small business like ourselves seems really difficult and costly. It plays into the hands of larger companies or start-ups with capital behind them. The problem with this is that it takes the work away from local companies and you've got start-ups with untrained staff carrying out home improvements.

- How effectively is your LA able to engage (Trustmark/PAS2035/PAS2030 certified) installers?

St Helens Borough Council are working with the LCR combined Authority and the Local Energy Hub Northwest to produce a retrofit framework which will include a range of retrofit services to assist with the delivery of future schemes including LAD.

- 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?

We are currently working with Rhea Projects Ltd, a managing agent for our heating and insulation schemes. Rhea have arrangements to procure local contractors and engage with contractors regarding delivery of schemes working to Trustmark/PAS2035 standards.

## **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? What actions (if any) have your social housing partners taken?

St Helens Borough Council do not own any social housing, we have received information from local registered providers.

Torus is the boroughs largest social housing provider

Torus have had had some ERDF funding that has part funded the following:

- External wall insulation programme in progress that started late 2020
- Underfloor insulation programme in progress that started early 2020
- A completed innovative electric heating upgrade to a sheltered property replacing outdated storage heaters

In addition, Torus have completed the following works that have a positive impact on tenants and carbon reduction:

- Central heating upgrades – replacing with more efficient gas boilers and controls
- Upgrades of communal heating system distribution pipe work to support individual billing
- Window upgrades – improving the efficiency of double glazing
- Completion of a remote monitoring/smart controls to central boiler plant to a sheltered housing scheme, with a full year's energy bills to support any future roll out programme

Torus have also recently recruited for an Energy, Sustainability and Innovation Manager who will focusing on finalising the groups environmental and sustainability strategy/trialling new technologies and maximising grant opportunities. Torus has also joined the working group

‘Vantage Decarbonisation’ which is a benchmarking group working with a number of other national RSL’s to share knowledge, learning and best practice.

#### Onward Response

To date, our approach to energy efficiency measures in St Helens has been limited to replacement of energy efficient gas boilers. Our future approach is currently being scoped to tackle both our sub SAP C properties from a fabric first perspective but also carbon neutral heating solutions. We are in the process of piloting both GSHP and ASHP installations elsewhere in the portfolio and hope to use these pilots to fully understand the benefits and costs for installing such measures. Once our approach and strategy has been defined, we will be looking to package schemes by LA, including for the properties we own at Cement City.

- 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)

Social Housing Partners have advised that they do have access to the information/knowledge within their organisations. Torus provided the following response:

Yes, Torus use’s it’s housing management and asset management databases to maintain stock well as SAVA’s Intelligent Energy software to help understand energy performance and establish new initiatives to improve it. This data is maintained by an objective to stock condition survey circa 8k properties per annum with a combination of targeted stock condition surveys, void property surveys and collect data while operatives and other asset teams are on site. In addition to this, Torus uses a wide array of data to measure the performance of each of its homes at estate, block and individual level. The model measures performance in 3 different strands – financial, social and environmental. In reality the environmental measure focuses on the risk of tenants slipping into fuel poverty and therefore gives a useful indicator as to where to focus improvement measures in the future.

Torus has the benefit of it’s own commercial contractor within the group who deliver the majority of repairs, maintenance and Investment works with the exception of some specialist works. The groups procurement is managed centrally, and this is currently being aligned following post amalgamation.

- If no, would it be easy/difficult to obtain this information?

N/A

- 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?

Social Housing partners have reported the following challenges:

Supply chain issues causing programme delays – Products that normally take 2 weeks might now take 2 months.

Tenant co-operation – most works are predominantly external, but works where internal access is needed, this can create difficulties. Underfloor insulation is one such scheme and this has been exacerbated in the pandemic environment. There have been difficulties in adequately consulting with customers to ensure they gain a full understanding: e.g. to convey benefits of innovative retrofit works/ allay disruption fears in order to gain access and complete works.

Funding - there is no consistent and long-term funding stream and when new grant is identified, there is still a perception of there being a dash for cash which presents challenges for both housing providers and the installer market. The stop-start nature of these types of projects (in part due to the nature of how funding streams come about), result in unit rates are still at a level which are unsustainable to fully fund from a business plan perspective. Longer-term funding commitments are likely to result in more buy in from the sector resulting in economies of scale from a unit rate perspective.

- 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?

Social Housing providers have advised that they use a range of information including intelligent energy software solutions which allows modelling of different interventions and the anticipated impact on SAP and improved thermal efficiency. From this initiatives and projects to further improve energy performance can be developed.

- 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?

Social Housing Partners have identified the following considerations:

Timescales - allowing enough time for applications as these invariably require substantial data to back them up. But even more important is ensuring there is a suitable allowance of time to plan, procure and deliver works within the agreed funding window. It is therefore paramount that successful funding applications are communicated swiftly.

Consistent and longer-term Funding Streams - there is still a perception of there being a dash for cash which presents challenges for both housing providers and the installer market. Longer-term funding commitments are likely to result in more buy in from the sector resulting in economies of scale from a unit rate perspective.

- 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?

Social Housing Partners have advised that the willingness of tenants to allow retrofit works can vary, but understandably where there is an obvious measurable benefit to the tenant,

then it is much easier to secure participation. It is thought that the effects of the pandemic may result in longer timescales required for projects that require access to the inside of a tenant's home.

- Does the approach to retrofit change for leaseholders in mixed tenure blocks? What encourages them to co-operate?

Torus provided the following response:

Blocks that contain leaseholders do add an extra level of complexity where there is a requirement to consult within the boundaries of the Section 20 of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act. This can add approximately 3 months to any delivery timescale and most of the lease agreements that exist within Torus require the leaseholder to pay their contribution within 12 months. This can therefore make it more challenging to complete schemes such as EWI where it is necessary in order to complete the works for the whole block.

### **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?

Yes

- 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.

St Helens Council's Private Housing Services is responsible for the PRS minimum standards, this service includes the Enforcement Team and Affordable Warmth Outreach Service. The Affordable Warmth Team will be taking the lead on promotion of the standards to the private rented properties locally.

Vicky Whittle - vickywhittle@sthelens.gov.uk

- What method or methods does your authority use to communicate with landlords and tenants about the standards and other related issues?

St Helens Council has delivered forums for landlords in partnership with the NLA. Presentations are provided from a variety of partners on subjects that affect the PRS including energy efficiency and wider housing standards.

Comprehensive information is also made available on the St Helens Council website, this provides information for landlords and their tenants. We also undertake joint working with St Helens Council's Revenues and benefits team and the local DWP via mail outs and events as required ensuring local landlords are kept up to date with current standards and broader issues affecting the PRS.

- What barriers, if any, does your local authority face enforcing these regulations (e.g. identifying non-compliant properties/landlords, budgeting/resourcing, any legal issues)?

There are currently a number of barriers with the existing regulations. These include the current accuracy of EPC information, proactive identification of landlords and the low maximum landlord contribution cap. There is also no security of tenure for tenants reporting breaches of this legislation. We are aware that Government has recently consulted with regard to addressing some of these issues.

- Do you directly target landlords of EPC F and G rated properties to enforce these regulations? If yes, how? If no, please explain.

Not to date as we are awaiting potential amendments to the regulations. We commissioned an innovative piece of work with BRE to identify domestic private rented properties in the borough by cross referencing land registry data with Council Tax data. It is hoped that we can use this information with EPC data to undertake a targeted promotion ensuring landlords and their tenants are made aware of the PRS minimum standards.

## **Financial Support for Energy Efficiency**

Where possible, please set out your answers to the following questions by tenure (owner occupied, privately rented, or social housing).

- 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.

Heating – St Helens Council provide a boiler replacement / central heating scheme to owner occupied - low income households where there is a resident vulnerable to cold.

Since April 2019 we have assisted 180 properties access a major heating measure at a total cost of approximately £363,000, including estimated external funding of £173,000

Funding for these measures has been provided by:

St Helens Council's Housing Capital Funding

National Grid Warm Homes Fund

ECHO scheme (a scheme funded through the Warm Homes Discount wider industry initiatives)

ECO

Insulation – Since April 2019 we have directly assisted 33 properties with 38 insulation measures at a total cost of over £30,000

- What future investment for energy efficiency or low carbon heat measures do you have planned, and when are these investments planned for?

2020/21 - Capital (grant schemes) - £144K

2021/22 - Capital (grant schemes) - £275K

The Council are also planning to access LAD scheme (1b and 2) funding of £1.3 Million to provide major energy efficiency measures.

## **Fuel Poverty**

- Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?

Yes

- 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?

Due to data limitations and the relatively difficult way of assessing whether a household is fuel poor or not we target assistance to those households most at risk from cold related illness, those households on low incomes and vulnerable to cold.

We continue to incorporate EPC data into the Council's UNO energy efficiency database as bulk data is made available and have also been working with BRE to update our Housing Stock Condition database this ensures updated information is available to effectively target interventions.

- How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall Carbon Reduction Strategy?

St Helens Borough Council do not currently have a Carbon Reduction Strategy.

- Please highlight any fuel poverty issues specific to your area.

The Council is not aware of any Fuel Poverty issues specific to St Helens Borough, the current estimates of Fuel Poverty using the updated metric - Low Income and Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) – show that St Helens has Fuel Poverty rates higher than the national average but slightly lower than the Liverpool City Region and North West averages.

- 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.

Energy Projects Plus (EPP) are commissioned to deliver the Liverpool City Region (LCR) Collective Energy Switch - Switch Together, Save Together. This includes local authority partners, Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral, Liverpool, and Halton. The LCR Collective Switch has proved to be an effective mechanism in engaging with vulnerable residents and generating household savings for residents.

In St Helens, the Collective Switch scheme has now saved residents close to £260,000 on their annual fuel bills. Between April 2019 and March 2021 there have been 129 St Helens households registered to the scheme and 91 Switches giving approximately £20,000 savings on annual fuel bills.

In addition to the collective switch we also undertake a Warm Home Discount campaign promoting the availability of the discount. We work with the Council's revenues and benefits team to identify those residents most likely to qualify for the broader group scheme. We then send out letters advising residents of how to apply, further assistance to apply for the discount is available via the Save Energy Advice Line. From April 2019 1,428 households have been assisted to apply giving discounts on electricity bills of £199,920.00.

### **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.

- Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD?

Yes

o If yes, please indicate which phase you participated in and briefly outline the project.

o If no, please indicate what barriers prevented you from participation in the scheme.

LAD phase 1B - St Helens is part of a partnership project with other Local Authorities within the Liverpool City Region. In St Helens we have identified 667 properties to target for the provision on External Wall Insulation. The majority are semi-detached houses as well as some terraced housing. All of the properties identified are Wimpey No Fines Structure. The average EPC is a Band E. It is estimated that the proposed measures to the properties will improve the SAP rating from 49 to 61 which will bring the majority within EPC Band C.

- Would your Local Authority be in a position to manage the delivery of upgrades through a scheme such as LAD in 2022?

o If yes, please indicate the anticipated number of homes that could be upgraded per year.

o If no, please indicate what barriers would prevent you from delivering upgrades in your area.

We are currently working with the LCR Combined Authority and Local Authorities in our region to develop a LAD 2 programme that will provide major energy efficiency improvements. It is an ambition that this work will provide the foundations to ensure the successful delivery of future energy efficiency retrofit programmes.

### **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.

- Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (SoI) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)

Yes

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?

Since the start of the LA Flex delivery we have provided 391 declarations to low income and vulnerable to cold properties.

- How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?

Since the start of the LA Flex delivery we have provided 63 declarations to Fuel Poor/Hard to Heat properties.

- How many declarations were issued for in-fill?

None

- What is the highest income cap published in your SoI?

There is no income cap published in the SoI, please see statement below for the determination of low income and the method used to identify eligibility.

- If you have used an income over £30k gross, what reason have you given?

St Helens Council worked with Local Authority neighbours to produce the Liverpool City Region Joint Statement of Intent - The local authorities have defined, “low income” for the purposes of identifying households to be determined by the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([www.minimumincome.org.uk](http://www.minimumincome.org.uk)). The decision and reasoning to use the MIS as follows: 1. After analysis of the possible incomes of households in receipt of Help to Heat welfare benefits, excluding DLA, these households could all earn significantly more than those in table 1, Annex 6 of the Government guidance. Qualification would therefore be through Help to Heat, potentially leaving LA Flex redundant; 2. The use of the Minimum Income Standard is becoming more widespread amongst government bodies and organisations for determining low income; and 3. It is regularly updated to reflect changing living costs. 4. Unlike Help to Heat criteria, residents need an

additional qualifying criterion (vulnerable to the cold or high heating costs) other than income. Therefore, the higher income levels are justified to reflect the further needs.

- Do you charge for declarations to be signed? If so, please state how much?

No

### **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's Affordable Warmth Outreach Officers provide advice to residents on ways to improve energy efficiency, reduce fuel bills and support clients to access a variety of schemes. Advice around smart meters is provided within this general advice and when the residents request specific advice.

- 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

We have previously supported local organisations to access funding to promote Smart Meter take up via the Smart Energy GB Communities Fund.

### **Future Schemes and Wider Incentives**

- 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.

We will continue to work with our partners to maximise Affordable Warmth / energy efficiency interventions.