

Gateshead Council – Home Energy Conservation Act Report 2021

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Introductory Questions

1. Name of Local Authority
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
2. Type of Local Authority
Borough Council
3. Name, job title and email address of official submitting report

Belinda Humphrey, Energy Operations Team Leader
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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?

The strategy for carbon reduction and energy efficiency is incorporated into the Gateshead Housing Strategy 2019-2030, which contains the following objective:

- Improved energy efficiency of the housing stock, to help reduce fuel poverty and help meet climate change obligations and targets.

The Council also announced the Zero Carbon Heat Strategy in June 2021 which has three main objectives listed in order of priority and impact up to 2030:

- Deployment of Heat Networks – large scale deployment of heat networks, requiring up to £240m of investment, to deliver heat to up to 15,000 Council homes, and 68% of Council Buildings;
- Decarbonising the gas grid – strategic support for hydrogen deployment in the gas grid, with the ambition to convert the gas network to hydrogen in Gateshead by 2030; and
- Installation of Heat Pumps – small scale pilot installations in existing homes until impact on fuel poverty is confirmed, and support for installation in new build homes from 2025.

5. If yes, please provide a link

Gateshead Housing Strategy 2019-2030:

https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/media/4816/Housing-strategy/pdf/Gateshead_Housing_Strategy_2019_30.pdf?m=636892186922470000

Zero Carbon Heat Strategy (currently a cabinet report)

<http://democracy.gateshead.gov.uk/documents/s28909/Cabinet%20-%20zero%20carbon%20heat.pdf>

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?

Council properties

In the next two years we will move to onsite delivery of works to three multi storey blocks, insulating them and delivering a package of works that will safe guard the building's long -term sustainability as energy efficient and affordable homes. On top of insulation works the blocks will have heat interface units installed to give customers greater control over the heating in their home. We will also commence work on improving whole house insulation systems that were installed in the 1990's ensuring that these systems are still effective and working, where they are not, we will improve or replace them. In this time period we will pilot the installation of air source heat pumps in an off-gas estate. This scheme will include a range of energy measure that will support, guide and inform our approach to larger scale Net Zero works packages. We will also support a scheme that will deliver external wall insulation to an isolate rural community with a high proportion of solid wall homes. The mixed tenure scheme will help deliver improvements that will support the sustainability of homes across a diverse tenure community.

District Energy Scheme (DES)

The proposal is to extend the current District Energy Network within Gateshead, allowing the provision of low carbon energy direct to a variety of buildings. In future the extension of the network will allow the supply of heat to 271 homes in proposed residential housing developments, with potential connections to 550 low rise social housing units.

Chopwell

The proposal is to install up to 420 solid wall insulation measures to homes in Chopwell, funded by Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 of the Green Homes Grant

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 cost of running and administering the schemes generally adds ca. 10% to the capital cost of schemes, which is generally requested as part of the funding

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

Council:

- MHCLG;
- Emergent, Switch2;
- District Energy Scheme: Balfour Beatty, PPSL, CPC Civils, Hatton Traffic Management, SAV Systems, Sycous
- ECHO: Agility Eco
- Heat pump/Borehole: GEA, Drillcorp, Coal Authority, Environment Agency, Meldrums

Salix

- Majority of SALIX works delivered inhouse, and to council buildings.
- SALIX works currently paused, and replaced with Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, largely to local schools

Gateshead Council Housing stock

These works are delivered in a diverse and varied way, including inhouse delivery from the Council DLO and its partners to delivery through external delivery as part of commercially tendered works packaged.

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.

All schemes are funded to deliver both cost and carbon savings to building users (outputs reported separately). Tendering looks to maximise community wealth building, using local trades and/or labour where possible. Wider social benefits are expected as an outcome of the scheme, seen through energy savings and positive impacts on health which support lifting people out of fuel poverty and the wider poverty agenda.

For our social housing schemes, the schemes have created local employment opportunities but the main benefits have been:

- Safe-guarding the long term sustainability of homes for existing and future customers
- Reducing the opportunities for fuel poverty and illness related to cold or damp homes
- Ensuring that homes are affordable efficient and sustainable and contribute to Gateshead's Climate Emergency agenda.

Communications

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

Yes.

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

We generally signpost businesses to the Energy Savings Trust and to the Government's new UK Business Climate Hub following the launch of the Together for our Planet campaign.

Energy Services

This generally falls under the Neighbourhood management service, though we will signpost residents to relevant bodies for specific works, i.e., boiler replacement schemes. Energy saving advice is offered to all council buildings and schools, generally in the form of a site visit supported by a report including recommendations.

Information is provided on how to run heating and hot water systems e.g., using temperature set points and time schedules to minimise energy waste. Access is available to our energy management data base for all sites to be able to compare their energy consumption.

SALIX

Although Salix funding is not available outside the public sector we advise of the model and successes of such works to businesses, especially the likes of the community centres and other asset transfers when we respond to energy efficiency queries from them. As the scheme is effectively a loan with repayments met by actual energy savings it can stand up to anyone with a view to a calculated business case and low-cost loan. We use our experience and place in the centre of the community to advise thus.

Council housing

We generally signpost our customers for energy advice to both The Green Doctor and LEAP, who advise on finding the best energy deal and energy saving installation devices. The HEIGHTs project offered specific help to residents on switching tariff and using their new system/prepayment meter.

Private Sector Housing

The Private Sector Housing Team fulfils the Council's role as Local Housing Authority in respect of the identification of hazards to occupier's health or safety. More detail on this is set out below.

The Team uses every housing inspection, whatever the report made by the tenant to

carry out an inspection in respect of the hazard of excess cold. As well as requiring physical improvements that conserve energy, the Team ensure that the occupier understands how to use heating programming and thermostats and provides a range of other advice relating to energy saving support and financial help available for fuel bills.

In November 2021 the Team have carried out a promotional campaign alongside the Citizens Advice Consumer Advice Team to drive up request for help from private rented tenants. Links to promotional materials;
<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/19910/Is-your-rented-home-winter-proof>
<https://citizensadvicegateshead.org.uk/housing/is-your-private-rented-property-winter-ready/>

The Team have also facilitated training sessions to increase energy saving awareness amongst private sector housing officers, Council Housing Tenancy Support officers, Groundworks staff and Citizens Advice Consumer Advice and Housing Advisors, so that each is aware of the others services so that opportunities for cross referrals are maximized.

Training is ensuring high quality referrals from Council Teams to CAB for the following purposes; to increase Smart Meter take-up; warm home discount applications; Priority Service register applications; Company referrals; support for disconnections and energy saving advice, and from CAB to Private sector Housing to ensure physical improvements are undertaken by landlords where required.

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

Council

We communicate and encourage energy saving amongst our local businesses through our start-up support, small business services and account management activity and also through the Council's Business Gateshead Network which provides us with a platform for advocacy to promote more responsible business practices. The Council actively promotes Climate Change on its website with details of what Gateshead Council is doing, latest articles on climate change and actions we are taking to achieve a Zero Carbon Gateshead, what residents and businesses can do to reduce their carbon footprint, examples of how people and businesses across Gateshead are making changes to the ways they live and work to tackle climate change and ways to get involved. The Council published a Climate Emergency Action Plan in February 2021 which provides a road map to show how Gateshead can become carbon neutral by 2030.

Energy Services

We now have almost 700 domestic customers on 4 district heating schemes. Most of our contact has been through post, but that provides telephone numbers and emails for direct contact with the project delivery team for one-to-one advice. We produce annual reports to outline the works done to the property portfolio that advise on the extent of the energy efficiency projects undertaken in that calendar year and whilst some are purely internal documents, others are accessible by the public, thus communicating our progress towards annual energy savings.

LEAP

Throughout 2019, 281 domestic properties were visited as a result of referrals, which can be made by the tenant, family/friends, local authorities, medical staff, housing association staff. The referral process has been advertised through events, council letters, leaflets, posters and social media. From 2020 LEAP operated a phone-based service until property visits could re-start. In 2021 the LEAP scheme started to be ran by Groundworks – The Green Doctors which has been advertised with leaflets, posters and social media posts.

Private Sector Housing

See above

Local Green Supply Chain

14. 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

15. 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.

We are currently not undertaking any direct actions, however we will aim to deliver this through securing funding to enable this to happen. There is also a requirement through procurement to provide social value when tendering for works as well as using local suppliers where possible. We also work closely with the North East Local Enterprise Partnership who are developing their work in these areas.

16. 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?

Small scale energy efficiency measures such as energy efficient light bulbs, draught exclusion, radiator reflectors and individual energy efficiency advice issued to residents through LEAP and The Green Doctor.

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

The lack of resource to support residents and businesses in these areas prevents us from delivering any additional actions.

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

We set these as a requirement in our procurement process.

19. 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?

Through ongoing improvements to procurement, and complying with grant conditions.

Social Housing

20. 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?

LEAP

End of year report (2019), for LEAP in Gateshead showed a total lifetime bill of savings for all clients was £627,000. Between 2019-2020, 281 visits to residents were made.

Energy saving advice (energy switching, efficiency practices, and relevant energy saving schemes/projects). Small on visit energy saving measures including draft excluders, LED light bulbs, radiator reflectors, individual tenant surveys to identify resident issues with bills, heating system, insulation, comfort, or property.

The Green Doctor – Groundwork

The Green Doctor Scheme began to deliver the LEAP Scheme in 2021 and will continue to work with Council over the coming years.

Both Schemes have provided small scale energy efficient measures including:

- Energy bills and fuel debt support
- Grants for boilers & insulation
- Heating systems & controls
- Reducing energy costs in the home
- Water bills & debt
- Damp/condensation/mould advice
- Installing energy saving devices
- Advice on switching to find the best energy deal
- Draught proofing
- Reflective radiator panels
- LED light bulbs
- Damp humidifiers
- Pipe lagging
- Water saving devices

The Green doctors have 3 DEA's (Domestic Energy Assessors), 2 x retro-fit assessors & 2 x retro-fit co-ordinator on the team which helps to ensure that the measures

installed are of a quality standard.

HEIGHTs Project

Provided energy efficient district heating and double-glazed windows to 621 properties across 7 high rise blocks, also installed roof insulation to 6 blocks. Heating measures were supported by a £4.5m grant from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

District Energy Scheme

The Council published its Zero Carbon Heat Strategy, which outlines the aspiration to connect over 10,000 social homes to heat networks over the next decade. We are running a pilot on a small housing estate of 550 homes, to prove viability

21. 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)

Energy Services – UNO database

UNO is an energy data calculation tool. Using energy relevant data and is able to calculate SAP ratings and CO2 emissions for individual dwellings.

The database does require the manual input of data for properties and is only as representative/good as the data we have/do not have. The database is managed by the Energy Services Team but requires data from several departments within the Council.

The UNO database holds a large amount of data that is updated annually. Some of the key data held in the database includes:

Property type, property age, property construction details, window type, insulation, heating system information, energy efficiency measures (LED Light bulbs, draught excluders etc.), renewable energy measures e.g., Solar PV, and tenure.

GP2

Information for the Council's Operation and Non-Operational properties are held on the GP2 database. This information is key when projects directly or indirectly impact Council operation properties, as it may influence project location, logistics or determine if additional pre-construction works are required e.g., an up-to-date

asbestos survey to be carried. The database can be easily accessed internally and is managed by the Corporate Asset Strategy Team (CAST).

GP2 holds the following:

Site information

- Ownership/occupation details - including deeds and leases
- Site area
- GIA
- Block details
- Room details
- Asset Valuations

Insurance Valuations

Documents

- Site plan
- Block plan
- CAD plans
- Asbestos Report
- Condition Survey
- Water Hygiene Risk Assessments
- Programme for cyclical compliance inspections including dates and certificates
- Reactive Maintenance orders

Housing Repairs

We have ready access to customer profile information on the Reports Index, which is updated weekly. This shows us where our vulnerable customers are and which addresses we need to be aware of for health and safety reasons. The information regarding vulnerability is as good as what our customers tell us, and what we can update as we go, so there are some gaps. Regarding stock condition, my team have access to historical folders (from Decent Homes) and, also, Keystone, which gives us a guide of what improvements have been done when and when they are next due.

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

N/A

23. 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?

The greatest challenge is funding, whilst there are now many funding opportunities, either the timescales for delivery are too short, or there is no long-term funding strategy, to provide guaranteed longer-term funding (up to 3 years), to allow the procurement and management of larger schemes.

Additional issues have been that contractors have not been able to gain access to properties requiring repairs either due to a lack of communication with the tenants e.g. not being able to get in touch via phone, not returning calls or lack of response via email/letters resulting in contractors essentially 'door knocking' when they are in the area of tenants that have communicated well regarding repairs. In the occasional situations where access has not been successful after several attempts by the contractor the Council took sole responsibility to arrange and carry out those works.

24. 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?

The UNO database plays an important part in identifying suitable housing for retrofit schemes for example the Chopwell solid wall insulation scheme, as there can be stringent criteria from funding bodies specifying details such as property type, age, construction, heating system, insulation, tenancy etc. to enable the scheme being funded. The UNO database allows us to use the criteria detailed and narrow down a list of the eligible properties in specific locations.

We will also look at adopting a fabric first, insulation first, then other measures approach to ensure that we are prioritising the hard-to-treat properties. In addition we work with the private sector housing team to identify properties that fail the housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS)

25. 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?

Having more time to prepare/submit applications for funding as well as more time to spend the funding. Due to the timescale constraints, it does make delivery projects harder as it can result in several projects needing to be commenced simultaneously. Having a requirement to spend the funding in a short period also means up take of participants can be hindered, certain measures may have to be implemented at less suitable times e.g., external wall insulation should ideally be installed in dry/warmer months, but due to time constraints they end up being installed in winter. Although we are not deterred from applying for government funding, the time constraints can reduce the effectiveness of some projects.

26. 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?

Generally speaking, tenants are willing when it comes to retrofit measures that provide them with a clear tangible benefit that gives them more control or saves them money on energy bills, such as installing improved windows, new boilers and heating controls. However, when the benefits are less clear or require a lot of construction internally there is generally less willingness to participate, for example replacing the properties electrical wiring or replacing all radiator piping. There can be barriers for tenants to undergo retrofit works which can include highly vulnerable people, people with a risk of violence, or people with a history of hoarding for example. In these situations, the tenants will be identified as VIP. Whenever a VIP tenant requires works to be carried out, at least 2 operatives will attend the property, any secondary contacts (partners, relatives, carers) will also be contacted to arrange any additional support if required. Where tenants are vulnerable, we have a range of support options that we can use to help get the work completed; including decanting properties, offering hotel accommodation, support with removals and storage, packing up service and support with redecoration where they have no local support network.

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

Leaseholders are offered the same works as tenants, and provided the same tenant liaison support, where schemes are progressed, but given additional support to pay any contribution arising from the works, that they are liable for.

Domestic Private Rented Sector (PRS) Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

28. 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

29. 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.

The Private Sector Housing team lead on enforcing the PRS minimum standard as set out in previous answers, including through their inspection regime. Gateshead Council's named contact is Anna Tankerville, and the contact mailbox is privatesectorhousingcivic@gateshead.gov.uk.

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

Private Sector Housing (PSH) Team

See answer above about training and promotional campaigns.

The Council responds to individual requests for help from tenants that are dissatisfied with the standard of their rented home. The EPC is consulted and inspection carried out. Any deficiencies that present an Excess Cold hazard in accordance with the Housing Act 2004's Housing Health and Safety Rating System are identified and works required to address the hazard. Support is provided at the time of inspections to help tenants to understand how to use heating programming and thermostat functions.

The Council makes proactive contact with landlords when their portfolios are found to feature in multiple request for help from tenants about poor standards. Proactive inspections/EPC consultations are carried out and works required where standards fall short. Gateshead Council has implemented selective landlord licensing in several areas of Gateshead over recent years. As part of this process we regularly engage with landlords to discuss changes in legislation and landlord responsibilities. Licensing conditions also stipulate the legal requirements for energy performance and properties will not be licensed if they do not meet the legal requirement.

The PSH team has an amount of information on the Council Website to help private rented tenants understand the standard that is expected of their home and encouraged

to get in touch if they feel that their rented home is substandard so that an inspection can be carried out. During all of the above, should the Private Sector Housing team identify deficiencies in respect of the PRS Minimum Efficiency Standards, they will take action to encourage landlords to carry out works to rectify the deficiencies.

Prosecution is a very costly and time-consuming way to deal with enforcement of MEES, and the Council prefer to find ways to talk to larger landlords and managing agents about the need to act quickly to take advantage of the grant offer.

We would like to persist with encouragement for a further period to see if we can start to gain traction with some of the landlords, in the knowledge that they talk to one another and will hopefully spread the good news in a way that will lead to a change in behaviour and an uptake of the grants.

Gateshead Private Landlords Association

Gateshead Private Landlords Association was set up in 1997 for landlords to meet and encourage good management, the GPLA amongst other things, assists landlords to comply with relevant legislation. They advise they have 350 members, managing over 1,500 properties, in relation to energy efficiency and minimum EPC standards which are mandatory before the association will advertise their properties online and in print.

Council Website

Private rented tenants are encouraged to get in touch if they feel that their rented home is substandard, and an inspection is generally carried out as detailed above.

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

The barriers in this area are similar to the barriers in other areas, including the lack of resource to cover the amount of legislation to be regulated and having the relevant legal frameworks in place to take formal enforcement action. As above, we prefer to use encouragement rather than enforcement.

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

No, there is no direct targeting of properties that are EPC F and G, again due to the resource required.

Financial Support for Energy Efficiency - HERE

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

33. 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.

The budget is set according to the available grant funding for schemes secured from year to year, and as such is variable.

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

Multiple Solar PV farms - £4million PSDS grant - to complete Spring 2022

Installation of Photovoltaic (PV) to 4.No locations as listed below. The solar panels will aid carbon reduction targets which we are obliged to meet and have been funded by the governments Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme.

- Baltic Business Quarter (BBQ) – Ground Mounted Solar PV
- Gateshead International Stadium (GIS) - Ground Mounted Solar PV
- Gateshead Civic Centre – Car Park Solar PV Canopies
- PROTO – Roof Mounted Solar PV

The works to Baltic Business Quarter, Gateshead International Stadium, Gateshead Civic Centre and PROTO are being undertaken to install and connect to the Gateshead Energy Company's private wire network a total of ca. 4MW of Solar PV installations.

DES Network Extension - £5.9m of HNIP grant, and £4m of PSDS grant

- East extension of heat power network
- Connection of Gateshead Quays arena and conference centre
- Connection of Freight Depot housing site - 271 new build homes
- Installation of 6MW minewater energy system

Chopwell Green Homes Grant

A £6.2m grant offer from the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) Round 2 of the Green Homes Grant, to fund 625 solid wall insulation works in Chopwell. At present, due to limits on funding expenditure deadlines approximately 260 homes will be delivered initially but may be increased if an extension of the grant can be achieved.



Fuel Poverty

35. Does your Local Authority have a Fuel Poverty Strategy?

Gateshead Council is currently in the process of developing a Fuel Poverty Strategy, with outline information on the link below

<https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/3526/Acting-on-fuel-poverty>

Gateshead Council's fuel poverty strategy has focussed on the delivery of large-scale, capital improvement schemes which bring significant energy cost reductions and improvements to households connected to the schemes. For instance, the HEIGHTs programme, which delivers savings of ca.10% on energy bills through the installation of more efficient heating systems and energy efficiency measures. Gateshead Council recognises that while the benefits of these schemes are significant, they are only available to households directly connected to the scheme. As a response to this, Gateshead Council is introducing schemes that are available to all low income and vulnerable households in Gateshead, for instance, LEAP, ECHO and a borough-wide switching pilot. The addition of the Green Doctor programme, which is very similar to LEAP and works 1-2-1 with residents who are either identified as fuel poor by a professional organisation/case worker or by the resident who can then make a self-referral. The switching pilot unfortunately never materialised despite a significant amount of resource going into it in a bid to make it viable.

36. 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?

There is a Strategic Poverty Board tasked with tackling poverty in Gateshead and one of their key focus areas is 'fuel poverty. They are bringing together all stakeholders in the borough to review, discuss and agree how best to target limited resources to achieve maximum impact.

The Strategic Poverty Board was scheduled to undergo a review of its function just before the Covid pandemic hit and as such that review has not yet taken place. Instead Gateshead Council focused on supporting its residents through the pandemic with a raft of emergency support measures, some of which included aid with fuel debt and fuel meter top ups for those in fuel poverty or at risk of becoming fuel poor.

The Local Index of Need (LIoN), which is a map that shows LSOA level data for:

- Income & Poverty

- Education & Skills
- Children & Families
- Health, Care & Wellbeing
- Crime & Disorder
- Housing, Environment & Transport

This will enable the Council and stakeholders to focus resources in areas of most need. Once the poverty board review has taken place, the data from LIoN will be used to target specific support measures.

Gateshead's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) recognises the importance of fuel poverty, and it includes the following as their indicators of success:

- Reduced numbers of households living in fuel poverty.
- Reduced excess winter mortality.

The UNO database can also be used to monitor and analyse the performance of our housing stock and to identify problem areas to address.

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

Fuel poverty forms part of the Council's HECA Strategy, which in turn contributes to the carbon reduction strategy.

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

There are so many areas across the nation that have the same issues, which is ultimately households don't have enough money to meet the increasing costs of energy. Even more worrying when the energy price rises come to effect in October 2021.

Over the past 15/16 months during the pandemic, we've seen a significant number of our residents struggling to pay their energy bills or top up their pre-pay meters, often leading to the use of the emergency credit facility which is extremely expensive and costly to repay. This is because it's a mix of being benefit dependent, or losing work due to covid, possibly even furlough during the height of the pandemic. The increased amounts of time spent at home and with their children at home as schools have closed etc. have caused living costs to spiral, what with additional food to buy for kids that would usually have a free school meal, but also on heating the home when they're in all day either isolating, or 'staying home, protecting the NHS and saving lives'.

Add to that the fact we already have some of the most deprived wards in the country and you can see why fuel poverty hits so hard. We also have a number of homes in Gateshead that aren't living in fuel efficient homes, either with very poor insulation/efficiency or the fact their heating isn't gas central heating, it's storage heaters which is again an expensive way to heat a home.

39. 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.

LEAP and Green Doctor have both been well promoted across Gateshead, including throughout the Council's strategic and third sector partners, allowing many Gateshead organisations to refer into high quality fuel poverty provision. Both offer a one-to-one home visit where tailored support is given both on the spot via instant measures, but also longer term with advice on how to be more energy efficient, and also how to switch to cheaper or better value tariffs. The Council continues to promote specific dates of action via its social media channels in a bid to reach even more vulnerable residents who aren't currently engaged in Council or partner services.

During the coronavirus pandemic, various community hubs were set up across the borough to support residents in their local area. Each hub is ran by an appointed Gateshead Council employee and support residents with all aspects, including with fuel bills and energy efficiency advice.

Following the HEIGHTs project, Gateshead Council is now heat supplier to over 600 residents. We have benchmarked our heat tariffs against the 'big six' in a bid to ensure we offer residents the most affordable tariff for their heat, which also represents a saving against what they were previously paying.

Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery

40. Has your Local Authority Participated in GHG: LAD?

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

Yes - round 2 of the GHG: LAD will be used to fund up to 420 solid wall insulation works in Chopwell, Gateshead.

All solid wall Council homes in River Streets and North West Chopwell (ca. 50 properties) will have 50% funding provided, with the other 50% provided by the Council.

All owner occupiers of solid wall housing in River Streets and North West Chopwell (400 homes) will receive 100% funding, up to £10,000 per home, subject to review.

We have also offered the scheme to all 240 private rented solid wall homes in these areas. 50% of the grant can be offered, with balance paid by landlords. We do not expect to get 100% uptake but can offer to as many that want to participate and will be using current and future energy targets for rented properties to help drive uptake.

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

We couldn't apply for LAD1, as the fund was announced in summer holidays, with little time to bid. We bid for LAD1b - but project was rejected, on an error, which corrected on feedback, but grant had been allocated at that time. Process was poorly managed, and had too short timescales.

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

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

Yes. If funding remains, and importantly if funding is still allowed for all tenure properties, we will then consider expanding the offer of solid wall insulation to other areas in Gateshead. The exact number is unknown/funding dependant.

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

Bidding is still very constrained, due to stretched resources in managing funding and delivery

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

43. Has your local authority published a Statement of Intent (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)

Our original SOI has been superseded, and a revised SOI will be published soon.

Please answer the following questions to help us to understand LA Flex delivery in more detail:

44. How many declarations were issued for low income vulnerable households?

Unknown

45. How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?

Unknown

46. How many declarations were issued for in-fill?

Unknown

47. What is the highest income cap published in your Sol?

£26,700

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

N/A

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

No

Smart Metering

50. Please provide a brief statement outlining your current or planned approach to promote smart meter take up and supporting residents to achieve benefits.

We have no plans to promote smart meters to residents.

51. 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
N/A
- b. Arranging for smart meters to be installed by energy suppliers in vacant social housing premises
N/A
- c. Using social landlords to promote smart meter uptake
N/A
- d. Including smart meters in landlord licencing schemes
N/A
- e. Supporting residents who have had appliances condemned for safety reasons
N/A
- f. Other supporting activities
N/A

Future Schemes and Wider Incentives

52. 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.