

HECA Reporting 2021 Questions

Questions have a 4,000-character limit (Approx. 500 words)

- Name of Local Authority: Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Type of Local Authority: Unitary Authority
- Name, job title and email address of official submitting the report:
Muzaffer Dayaji, Home Energy Officer, muzaffer.dayaji@blackburn.gov.uk

Headline and Overview Questions

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

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has declared a Climate Emergency and has prepared a Climate Emergency Action Plan for the borough as a whole.

- **If yes, please provide a link to your current strategy here:**

<https://www.blackburn.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/pdfs/UA-Climate%20Emergency%20Action%20Plan-Final1.pdf>

- **If no, are you planning to develop one?**

Climate Change Strategy under development, which would include the above

Lancashire's 15 councils are collectively working on the development of the Greater Lancashire Plan. The Plan will set a long-term strategic vision for economy, public services and environment for the Lancashire Authorities and will underpin the development of a climate and decarbonisation strategy for the county.

- **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?**

Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) is a brand established by the 15 Local Authorities in Lancashire under which council backed domestic energy efficiency schemes are delivered. A procured managing agent operates and delivers CHiL schemes on behalf of the local authorities. The following CHiL schemes are being delivered or developed for delivery during the next 2 years:

- Delivery of ECO and ECO-Flex for cavity wall and loft insulation, replacement boilers and first time central heating.
- Warm Homes Fund – installation of first time central heating

- Warm Homes Fund – installation of first time central heating in Park Homes.
- Community scheme gas connections – Projects have been delivered in Blackpool, Wyre, Fylde and Chorley to date.
- Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme. £12 million of funding secured under Phase 1b. Work is underway on preparing an application for round 2.
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has provided £43,000 to deliver affordable warmth interventions such as replacement boilers, heating system repairs, servicing and insulation measures. This is targeted at those at greatest risk of their health being affected by having a cold home.
- **What has been, or will be, the cost(s) of running and administering the scheme(s), including the value of grants and other support made available, plus any other costs incurred (such as administration)**

The following grants have been secured for Lancashire :

- £12 million from the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme
- £2.2m from the Warm Homes Fund for the installation of first time central heating.
- £1.8m from the Warm Homes Fund for first time central heating in Park Homes
- All other schemes are delivered through securing ECO or ECO-Flex for delivery of measures.
- £115,000 funding from Electricity NorthWest Ltd to support vulnerable residents with contributions.

The cost of running and administering these schemes is absorbed into the funding secured for delivery.

The £43,000 Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council fund to deliver affordable warmth interventions has no ongoing cost to the Council.

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

The CHiL admin hub works with local businesses to install ECO measures and engages directly with energy providers to secure funding, engaging with local stakeholders such as Home Improvement Agencies, local council grant teams, as well as Housing Standards and Environmental Health departments.

CHiL also works with the following:

- Affordable Warmth Solutions and National Grid to deliver Warm Homes Projects

- National Energy Action (NEA). NEA is supporting the Lancashire GHG LAD application and will be delivering an element of the bid in Preston.
- The Local Energy North West Hub has been supporting the development of the GHG LAD applications.
- Local Registered Providers to develop and deliver GHG LAD projects.
- We work collaboratively with Electricity NorthWest Ltd to support their vulnerable customers with advice and measures
- Connect4U is the charitable arm of CHiL set up to bring in investment to help vulnerable residents to access funds to help towards the cost of heating interventions.
- As a past Ashden Award winner CHiL is a member of the Ashden Alumni network and is currently receiving professional mentoring to support and develop the Connect4U CIC to help raise its profile and bring in additional investments to further help fuel poor residents in Lancashire.
- Locally CHiL engages with local third sector organisations such as Citizens Advice and Age UK to link up services and cross-refer as well as with hospitals, drop in centres, parish councils and community groups to raise awareness of CHiL schemes
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council works closely in partnership with 3rd sector organisations to maximise any opportunities for the residents of the borough. This includes commissioning Care Network, a Charitable organisation to provide a Healthy Homes Scheme. The Scheme provides home visits for vulnerable residents and includes energy advice, tariff switching advice, registering for Priority Services Register and signposting/referring to the local authority's energy section for energy efficiency grants.
- **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.)?**

Since the last HECA report (from 1 June 2019- 31 March 2021). CHiL schemes have delivered the following across Lancashire:

(The figures in the paragraphs are the totals done in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council by CHiL

Since 1 June 2019 CHiL has delivered the following measures across Lancashire:

497 first time central heating (WHF) (54)

110 park homes first time central heating (WHF) (0)

444 boiler swaps – (56)

Loft insulation - 27 (12)

CWI – 22 (11)

725 Energy Advice Calls - ENWL customers

208 Energy Advice Visits - Park Homes Customers

1905 Energy Advice visits/calls - Cat 3 Warm Homes Fund Project

Energy and carbon savings achieved varies depending on the property type and the measure installed. Using average estimates from the Energy Saving Trust, loft insulation (0-270mm) can save an average of £161 / year on energy bills and 707 kg carbon dioxide / year (<https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-insulation/roof-and-loft>) and Cavity wall insulation can save an estimated average of £130 / year on energy bills and 570 kg carbon dioxide / year.

(<https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/home-insulation/cavity-wall>)Replacement boiler savings - [Installing an energy efficient boiler - Energy Saving Trust](#)

The GHG LAD phase 1b and 2 funding is anticipated to deliver renewable heating and insulation measures to approximately 1300 energy inefficient homes with a low Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Rating. The funding will target low income residents across Lancashire.

The CHiL scheme works with local installers and suppliers in the delivery of energy efficiency schemes supporting local businesses where possible. The delivery of GHG LAD projects will bring more local suppliers onboard, supporting them to upskill and supporting the local economy

It can be difficult to track direct health impacts and savings from affordable warmth measures, however some of the personal stories and feedback received provides a narrative around the impact it can have on someone's life and wellbeing –

A resident in Blackburn applied to CHiL for Central Heating. The resident had no hot water or heating for a number of years. They were using the cooker to boil water. The resident also had a number of health conditions including Cancer. The resident said, "I'd like to thank the Council and CHiL for all their help. Having hot water and heating in my house has changed my life. My health and mental state has improved and I am feeling a lot more positive about the future. A huge thanks again for everyone who helped"

Communications

- **Does your local authority provide any advisory service to consumers (and businesses) on how to save energy?**
- **If yes, please briefly outline how this is undertaken**

As part of the delivery of CHiL schemes, advice is provided to residents on energy efficiency, behaviour change and advice on energy bills, tariff switching, securing warm homes discount and signing up for priority services registers.

Council Officers offer advice, signpost to support services and refer to CHiL.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have commissioned Care Network, a Charitable organisation to provide a Healthy Homes Scheme. The Scheme provides home visits for vulnerable residents and includes energy advice, tariff switching advice, registering for Priority Services Register and signposting/referring to the local authority's energy section for energy efficiency grants.

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

Residents are offered support and advice when measures are being installed. General information on energy saving and the schemes available are communicated to residents, through leaflets distributed via local charities, community events, health care providers and Local Authority service providers and the CHiL website and Facebook page. CHiL carries out targeted mailouts to advertise any specific schemes to residents.

Local Green Supply Chains

- **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 local supply chain is currently being assessed to identify a supplier framework for GHG LAD delivery and framework.

- **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.**

The GHG LAD scheme makes provision for upskilling and supporting local installers. The policy for delivery is to use Lancashire installers (or ones bordering Lancashire) . We are using the Enabling Fund to help installers gain the necessary qualifications to be able to deliver measures using the LAD funding stream. Products, wherever possible, will be manufactured in UK.

- **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?**

Please see answer above about communication to residents. Specific promotional material including leaflets, referral forms, web content, social media and press

releases has been developed as part of the comms plan for delivery of the GHG LAD scheme.

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

N/A

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

See answers above.

- **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?**

New initiatives such as the GHG LAD schemes will support decarbonisation of the domestic housing sector.

Many authorities are declaring Climate Emergencies and developing plans and policies to deliver on these commitments.

Blackburn with Darwen's Local Plan has recently been out to consultation and responses are being considered. The Plan aims to support a carbon-neutral borough.

<http://blackburn-darwen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/UA-Consultation-Draft-Local-Plan-1.pdf>

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?**

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council does not have its own housing stock. Social housing stock in the Borough is managed by Together Housing.

- **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)**

Local Authorities generally do not have access to this information if they do not have their own social housing stock.

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

Information can be accessed from EPC data but it is not easy to manipulate. Some information has been provided by the Local Energy North West Hub in support of developing applications for GHG LAD funding.

- **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?**

Quality of work can be a barrier

- **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 council is using Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) data and EPC data (mainly E, F and G's). This information is overlaid on a map to identify and help target suitable housing stock and measures for retrofit.

There is no information available at this time as to what the Social Housing company in the Borough are doing.

- **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?**

See answer above regarding barriers to taking action. The requirement for a contribution can also be a barrier to applying for funding.

- **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?**

This would be a question for RPs to answer.

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

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.**

The council's Housing Standards team are responsible for enforcement of the PRS minimum standard. The contact person for this team is Paul Hodges who is the Principal Environmental Health Officer. **Email - paul.hodges@blackburn.gov.uk**

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

Information is on the Council website, occasional Landlord Forum meetings and occasional mailshot / emails to landlords.

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

Enforcement activity around these regulations is currently limited and differs between local authorities. There are practical challenges in identifying non-compliant properties, contacting landlords and resourcing the activities. The complicated system of exemptions discourages use of these regulations and there is other legislation available to make energy improvements that local authority officers are more familiar with in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Over the last year, staff and resources have been redirected towards dealing with responding to the pandemic and urgent housing work only.

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

In delivering GHG LAD schemes the landlords of lowest EPC properties will be targeted. As part of the council's selective licensing schemes an EPC is required to be submitted as part of each application for a property licence and is looked at by the Housing Standards team.

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.**

Please see earlier answer on funding secured to promote and deliver energy schemes.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have commissioned Care Network, a Charitable organisation to provide a Healthy Homes Scheme. The Scheme provides home visits for vulnerable residents and includes energy advice, tariff switching advice, registering for Priority Services Register and signposting/referring to the local authority's energy section for energy efficiency grants.

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

See previous answers on GHG LAD schemes in development .

Fuel Poverty

- **Does your local authority have a fuel poverty strategy?**

The council does not have a fuel poverty strategy, however addressing poverty in its broadest sense, with fuel poverty as a key element within that, is a priority outlined in the borough's [Health and Wellbeing strategy](#). The Council is also working with Child Action on Poverty during 2021 to develop a plan for tackling child poverty in Blackburn with Darwen. This will also include raising awareness of fuel poverty, tackling the stigma associated with it and promoting the support available to residents in need of help.

The current [Report of the Lancashire Director of Public Health and Wellbeing](#) identifies fuel poverty as a measure of inequality where Lancashire is significantly worse than the national average. The report sets out a commitment to tackle health inequalities in Lancashire.

The council is due to launch a Fuel Poverty Toolkit in the September 2021. This will give residents and professional's information, guidance on Fuel Poverty as well as signposting to Energy Efficiency schemes available through the council and CHiL.

- **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?**

CHiL works with local stakeholders such as Home Improvement Agencies, Citizens Advice and Age UK to identify vulnerable residents, link up services and cross-refer.

We promote schemes and the measures available to frontline health and social care staff, ensuring the most vulnerable are targeted, and link up with other council support services such as Disabled Facilities Grants.

We work with Electricity NorthWest to support their customers that are identified as vulnerable and listed on the Priority Services Register.

CHiL targets areas of high fuel poverty by holding community events, such as the 'heat and eat' events held during 2018.

Properties that are known to require measures that we have funding for are targeted with mailouts and leaflet drops. Properties with low EPC's and in areas of deprivation and fuel poverty are being targeted for measures, including those off-gas communities.

Local Authorities work continuously to identify and support vulnerable residents and this is an ongoing process. The work over the last year to respond to the impact of the covid pandemic on our residents, particularly those vulnerable, has helped identified those that need additional support, this work is ongoing through the district community hubs and support networks established.

- **How does fuel poverty interlink with your local authority's overall carbon reduction strategy?**

Our key actions to address fuel poverty by improving the energy efficiency of properties through the installation of energy saving and renewable heating solutions together with advice on reducing energy usage are key actions to reduce carbon emissions from the domestic sector.

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

Blackburn and Darwen falls within the worst 20% of local authorities in England for fuel poverty. In 2019, around 16% of households in the borough were in fuel poverty. In general, parts of the borough suffers from poor housing stock, large number of residents with health conditions and high rates of unemployment. Many residents are in fuel poverty due to the poor housing conditions and/or low income.

- **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.**

Please see previous answers on schemes and partnerships in place to promote energy saving measures and advice to those in fuel poverty

Green Homes Grant

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?**

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

Yes – Participated in a collaborative Lancashire bid in phase 1b. Funding secured for specific projects in 5 districts together with support for eligible residents and properties across Lancashire. Up to £10,000 is available per property for eligible measures:

- Insulation (solid wall insulation, loft/cavity, room in roof and underfloor)
- Renewable heating technologies
- Energy efficient external doors and window upgrades (single glazed to double glazed)

Application for Phase2 being developed.

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

- **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.**

The LAD 2 bid includes proposal to deliver improvements to 1,000 properties across Lancashire. This could potentially be repeated but dependant on collaborative ventures and the specific requirements of the funding to be able to find and deliver to eligible properties.

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

N/A

The Energy Company Obligation

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 (Sol) for ECO flexibility eligibility? (Y/N)

Yes.

[ECO and ECO Flex funding \(chil.uk.com\)](http://chil.uk.com)

[Statement of Intent for ECO Flexible Eligibility \(blackburn.gov.uk\)](http://blackburn.gov.uk)

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?

60

- How many declarations were issued for Fuel Poor households?

36

- How many declarations were issued for in-fill?

0

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

£30,000

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

N/A

- **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.**

CHiL has previously linked up with Smart Energy GB to support the smart meter roll out, leaflets were produced with the Lancashire 'Cosy Homes' branding and some local energy officers attended training provided. However, we have experienced issues with the roll out with residents being left with obsolete meters after switching energy providers, as well as connectivity issues in rural areas so currently no further work is planned.

- **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 or Wider Initiatives

- **Please outline any future schemes or wider initiatives not covered above that your local authority has carried out or is planning to undertake to improve the energy efficiency in residential accommodation.**

Along with all the initiatives mentioned above, the LA's Building Control section also ensures that the minimum Building Regulation standards are met in terms of energy efficiencies on any relevant Building Control applications submitted into the Council.

