**The Future shape of the English Housing Survey - consultation response**

**London HECA Forum**

The London HECA Forum represents local authority energy and fuel poverty officers in Greater London. We have over 60 local authority members from across the 33 London boroughs and over 20 associate members from partner organisations involved in promoting energy efficiency within the capital. We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation on a review of the Priority Services Register.

We are not opposed to a review of existing questions to ensure all remain current and relevant but do not wish to see the survey paused or run on a biennial basis.

**1. What cost-effective solutions are there to redesign the survey? We are open to any innovative ideas for improving the delivery and/or cost effectiveness of the survey. Please describe your ideas, detailing how the approach would meet your analytical needs**.

Due to the importance of the survey and the data collected for many local authorities we would argue for protected spending but DCLG may wish to speak to certain local authorities about sharing costs including boosted geographical surveys. This would be relevant in areas where the BRE data modelling doesn’t produce reliable assumptions due to the unusual nature of the housing stock.

**2. Pausing the English Housing Survey for one year in 2015-16 and/or running the survey on a biennial basis are possible approaches to deliver cost savings. Would you be affected if the department were to adopt either or both of those approaches? If so, please explain how, using examples on the way you use the data to illustrate your response.**

Currently many local authorities rely on the data collected through the English Housing Survey (EHS) as a key or indeed the main data source to model local housing conditions. As local authorities we are regularly required to benchmark our work using Government statistics, for example by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in relation to guidance on HECA reporting. The EHS has allowed us to do this.

Another example of how the data collated is currently used comes from Newham which has an address-level energy property database which is updated annually. Using this data they are able to benchmark for a particular year for topics such as SAP ratings, property types, installation levels etc - showing relative movement since the previous year. This is not available at any other level, sub-regional or regional.

Therefore statistical reliability of the EHS is crucial. It is critical that it is based on sample inspections, and that the number of these is statistically sufficient to base projections on. Any move to save money by reducing number of visits will be a false step.

EHS is further extensively used as a source by many other datasets which are important to us, particularly the DECC fuel poverty sub-regional stats. We use these stats to benchmark and also to target LSOAs. These stats are sometimes queried for their reliability and the reducing sample size of the new EHS after the merger with EHCS could be one of the reasons.

**3. If the department were to run the survey on a biennial basis, what would be the best approach to carry out a robust and cost effective survey? We are particularly interested in views and suggestions on set up costs, feasibility of a biennial survey, sample size options, ideas for following up respondents from the earlier surveys in the series and data collection methods.**

We do not anticipate that any significant savings could be achieved by running the survey biennial without also reducing the quality of the survey results. Currently the EHS contains a number of rotating questions, most of which are included on a biennial basis. This means that two years’ worth of data are combined to produce the figures on housing and health and regional analysis.Therefore it would stand to reason that a biennial survey would either need to incorporate questions which are currently being rotated on a biennial basis thus increasing the length and cost of the survey OR the data currently collected biennially collected every four years thus reducing the quality of the data.

**4. Which topics in the survey are of most and least value to you?**

The data of most importance is; energy efficiency data; decent homes data and data on the Housing Health and Safety rating System (HHSRS).

**5. Are there any questions that you would consider removing?**

We are not able to comment on or suggest any questions for potential removal from the EHS but would urge DCLG to carry out a careful review and consult relevant key stakeholders before removing any existing survey questions.

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