

### Home Energy Conservation Act - ALEO South East

The following was sent to ALEO SE by Fiona Booth, DECC on 28<sup>th</sup> June ([fiona.booth@decc.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:fiona.booth@decc.gsi.gov.uk))

*HECA introduced in 1995. Local Authorities required to;*

- *publish a brief report by 31 March 2017 on the measures (Green Deal, ECO, advice to householders or other actions) that it proposes to significantly improve the energy efficiency of all its residential accommodation (social housing, privately rented and owner occupied).*
- *as part of this, consider the role that local partners e.g. social housing providers, community organisations and others, can play to support their plans and the role that neighbour roll out of measures might play.*

*DECC would like to ask ALEO South East:*

- 1) *What are the considered benefits/advantages of HECA from LA point of view?*
- 2) *What are the considered disadvantages of HECA from LA point of view?*
- 3) *What might LAs like to see in any potential new guidance issued by DECC?*

*ALEO SE feedback will then be collated into DECC's work plans for HECA.*

*Update provided later.*

This was discussed at the ALEO SE meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> June and then circulated for wider comment by our members. The responses we've received are as follows:

#### **Hazel Hill, Bracknell Forest Council**

- Local authorities' endorsement of HECA activities is trusted by the public and contractors but we need to be better recognised for the work that we do. We can provide strong links internally (eg with the benefits team, adult social care, etc) and can be the key person between householders, deliverers and funding streams.
- However, there is a lack of resource and funding for this work: we could do more to help householders if there was a significant improvement in this situation.
- 76% of homes in Bracknell Forest are in the private sector: we need specific funding for owner occupiers (including for park homes)

#### **Amanda Martin, Dover District Council**

- Local authorities have a co-ordinating role. Lots of people are doing lots of different things in the community but we are the only ones with a statutory responsibility to report. The Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy is trying to bring some of these strands together.

#### **Debbie Haynes, Oxford City Council**

- 1) What are the considered benefits/advantages of HECA from LA point of view?
  - It gives a framework and a policy base for domestic energy reduction work.
  - It means that home energy and the health impacts of cold homes are considered in local authorities
- 2) What are the considered disadvantages of HECA from LA point of view?
  - *Not considered a statutory service so is the first area to go in cuts*
  - *Not matched directly with funding streams and currently no targets other than the fuel poverty one*
  - *Report writing requirement is useful place to summarise work but can be a burden when not matched with the above*

- 3) What might LAs like to see in any potential new guidance issued by DECC?
  - Details of household level data available to local authorities and how to access it to optimise efficiency

**Justin Bailey, Wealden District Council**

- 1) What are the considered benefits/advantages of HECA from LA point of view?
  - Regular LA HECA reporting gives us a chance for reflection on what has been achieved or not achieved, and what actions can be made moving forward. This is essential if we are to keep moving forward with a clear sense of direction.
  - LA's are trusted and well placed to deliver and drive sustainable development. HECA officers have a really good understanding of the local area and its needs. This knowledge has been built up over a number of years. HECA Officers do not have a commercial spin on the advice we give and we are only interested in tackling fuel poverty.
- 2) What are the considered disadvantages of HECA from LA point of view?
  - Implementing and delivering HECA can be challenging when policy is turbulent. For example the government released the PRSEER which was founded on the Green Deal, later the green deal disappeared. There was no clarification that this void could be filled by other means. For HECA delivery to be effective government policies need to be working holistically and in harmony with HECA in an environment that provides certainty.
  - Implementing HECA is difficult when the policy is poorly aligned to our specific needs. This district is 80% rural so we have a strong reliance on off-gas heating technologies. HHCRO and gas connections cannot be applied to a large area in Wealden. The RHI has been impossible for fuel poor households to access. The introduction and success of third party financing models is yet to be seen. Adding to this we have over 1000 park homes in Wealden and a huge policy void in this area.
- 3) What might LAs like to see in any potential new guidance issued by DECC?
  - Another template would be useful. I think it would be useful if this reporting process was not just implemented as a paper based exercise but also as an opportunity for LA's to get tailored advice, feedback and guidance specific to the development of HECA reports. This would not only bring about meaningful change but would also be an ideal opportunity for DECC to understand the detailed challenges LA's face on the ground.

**Matthew Bird, Mid Sussex District Council**

I would like the Government to emphasise the importance of HECA and insist that a domestic energy role is a function of local government. A strategic function is needed to link with community energy groups, social enterprises, local installers, utility companies and other local professionals such as Environmental Health Officers, Wellbeing and Housing. Given the patchiness of support and uncertainty surrounding national schemes a local authority function is vital in order to provide continuity and area-based approaches.

**Stuart Taylor, Guildford Borough Council**

- 1) Having a legal obligation to consider home energy conservation helps to protect the services LA's offer. It raises the profile of our schemes internally, even if it makes little difference to their profile externally
- 2) There are no obvious disadvantages under the current regime, as we now have the ability to produce simple update reports rather than a complete report
- 3) Future guidance should recognise that time spent creating reports to a prescriptive regime set by DECC could distract from the day to day job. The purpose of the HECA report should be to focus in on what successes we've had, identify any weaknesses and easily compare with others and develop plans for future years. There is little sense us writing huge reports or statutory returns if no-one is going to use the information.
- 4) There should be advice from central government on best practice to give LAs a steer as to the objectives to incorporate in their strategies, whilst still allowing local priorities and initiatives.

*Updated 28<sup>th</sup> August 2016*

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