

Southampton Healthy Homes: 1st April to 31st December 2022

Highlights

- 1,033 households supported - a 60% increase on 2021-22
- Total gains achieved for households valued at £258,063
- 56 households have benefitted from 66 large energy efficiency measures resulting in:
 - Estimated lifetime energy bill savings £245,003
 - Estimated lifetime carbon savings 1,158.61tCO_{2e}

Introduction

tEC delivers Southampton City Council's affordable warmth service, Southampton Healthy Homes. This comprises two sub-projects:

- Advice in Southampton (AIS): bespoke, in-depth affordable warmth advice appointments; and
- Southampton Healthy Homes (SHH): casework and funding for energy efficient home improvements and complex billing support for a vulnerable sub-set of AIS clients.

Information, guidance and support is available over the phone, via email, at home visits and at outreach events and via our website. Affordable warmth guidance and advice provided includes:

- Home energy efficiency (impartial and up-to date information on heating, insulation and renewable technologies);
- Heating benefits (advice and support on the warm home discount, winter fuel payments, and pre-payment meter top-up vouchers);
- Fuel and water bills (support with understanding bills dealing with meter and bills issues/disputes and information on consumer rights);
- Damp, mould and condensation (advice on how best to tackle these issues and information on the support available through the project for vulnerable households);
- Vulnerable consumer support (information and support signing up to the priority services register and up-to-date information and signposting to other types of cost of living support in the city);
- Reducing energy use e.g. understanding use, opportunities to use less (behaviour change);
- Smart meters (benefits, pitfalls and how to use the in-home display);
- Private rental energy efficiency standards (tenants and landlords rights and responsibilities); and
- Benefits, budgeting and debt (via a referral to Citizens Advice Southampton /Welfare Rights and Money Advice).

Casework support is provided to households where our additional longer-term support is required to resolve their enquiry. Our advisers work closely with the client, their support

network and third parties to resolve complex problems and facilitate the installation of home energy efficiency/low carbon improvements.

Activities

The Southampton Healthy Homes (SHH) team has assisted 1,033 households since 1st April 2022. This is a **60% increase on the same time last year** and greater than the total number of households assisted in 2021-22 (see chart 1, below). 48% of households supported over the past nine months are either owner-occupiers (35%) or private tenants (13%), see chart 2 (below).

Chart 1. Number of affordable warmth clients

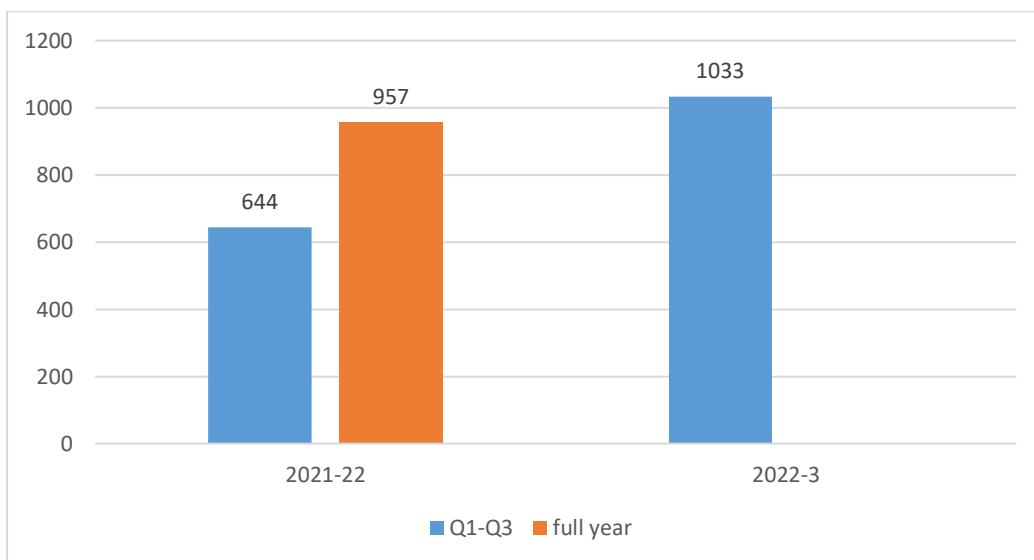
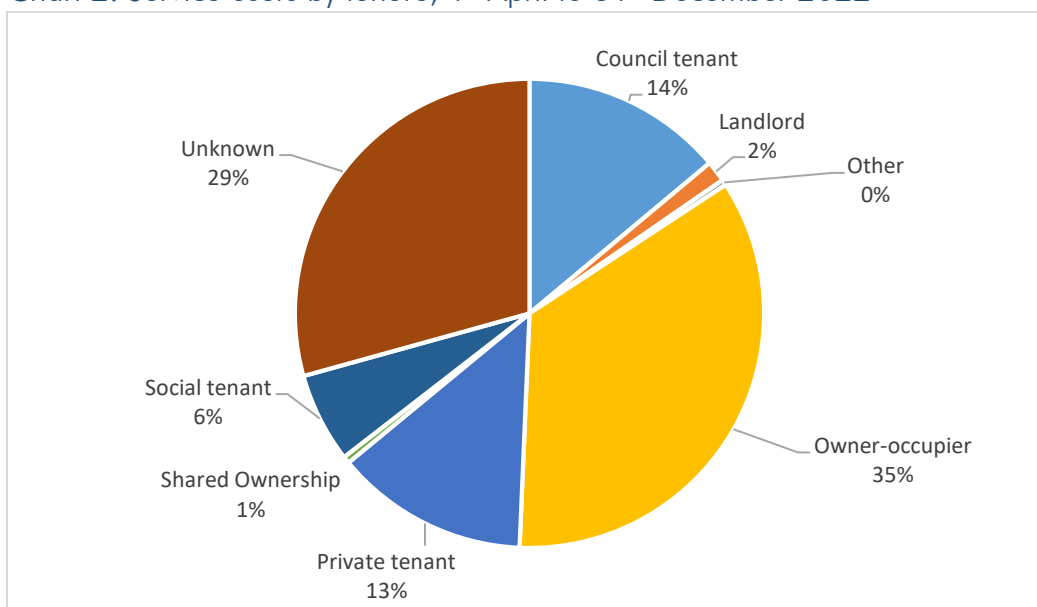


Chart 2. Service users by tenure, 1st April to 31st December 2022



The map below shows the distribution of households accessing Healthy Homes support and table one includes financial gains achieved for households supported through Southampton Healthy Homes this year.

Map 1. Southampton Healthy Homes clients 1st April – 31st December 2022

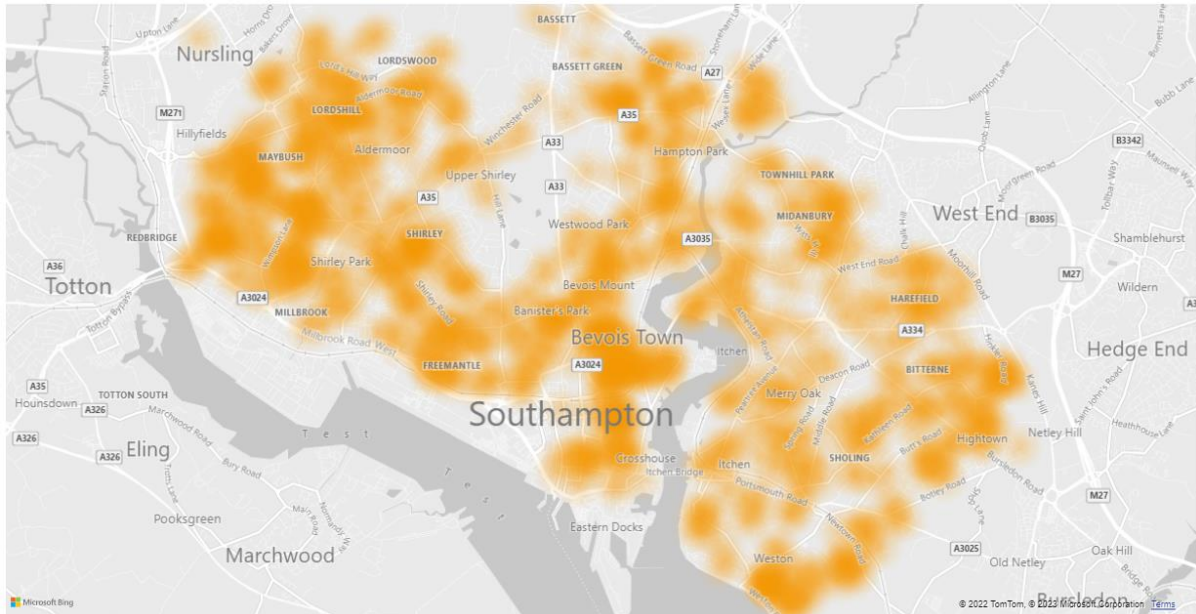


Table 1. Financial gains for households supported, year to date

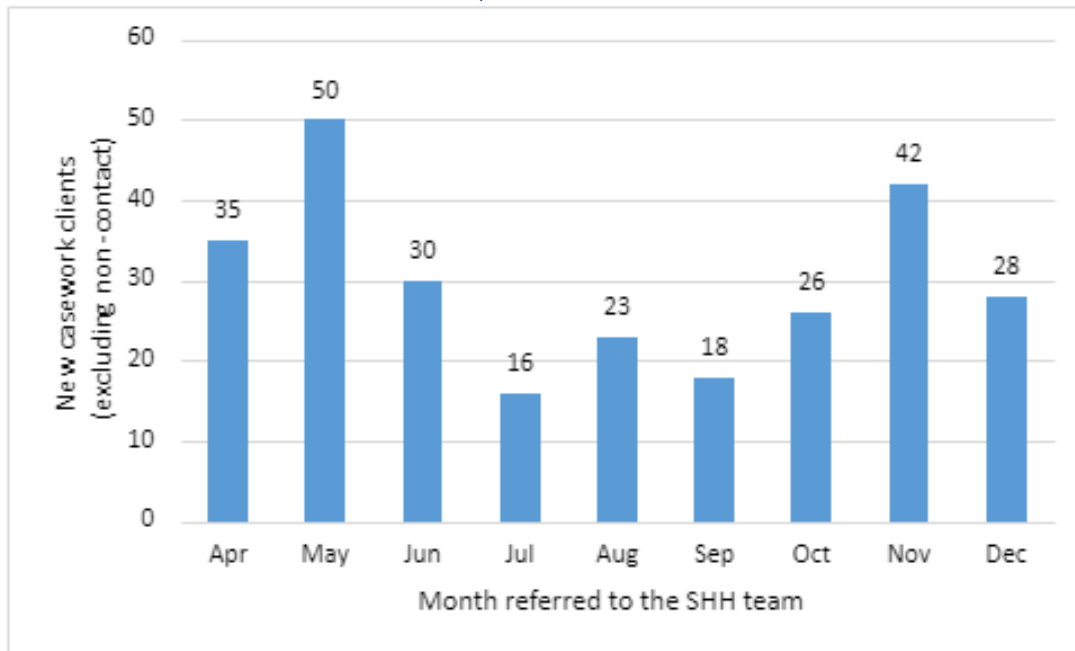
Type	Amount, £
Debts cleared	1,550
Warm Home Discount	600
Estimated lifetime bill savings from small energy efficiency measures	4,038
Estimated lifetime bill savings from large energy efficiency measures	245,003
Other benefits/charitable support including water bill savings	6,842
Total	258,063

Note: financial figures rounded to the nearest £.

Casework

A sub-set of clients receive casework advice through the Southampton Healthy Homes project. This long-term, detailed advice is time consuming but results in substantial energy bill savings, carbon reductions and reduced risk of negative mental and physical health outcomes associated with cold, damp and mouldy homes. The team started supporting 268 new casework clients between 1st April 2022 and 31st December 2022. The chart below shows the number of new casework referrals by month received. These figures do not represent total casework demand during this period as they do not account for ongoing casework for clients from the previous quarter or returning historical clients seeking new support.

Chart 3. New casework clients 1st April to 31st December 2022



Warm spaces and winter warmth packs

The SHH team have researched warm spaces availability across the city, in order to share this information with clients where appropriate. We have also held service briefings for SVS/SO:Linked and social prescribing teams so that colleagues involved with the provision of warm spaces are aware of the SHH offering and how to refer clients. We are extending this offer to other warm spaces venues and key warm space partners including the Community Wellbeing Team (home visiting nursing team).

In addition, we are coordinating the sourcing and distributing winter warm packs to vulnerable households who are struggling to keep warm and well or reduce energy costs, including those who are unable to the city's warm spaces. Funding has been provided by the Integrated Care Board and SCC's Household Support Fund.

Packs are tailored to the needs of the household and items include:

- Blanket (fabric);
- Thermal hat;
- Thermal socks;
- Instant soup sachets;
- Instant hot chocolate;
- Thermometer card;
- Dressing gown;
- Scarf/snood;
- Gloves;
- Hot water bottle;
- Thermos flask;
- Electric throw blanket;

- LED lightbulbs; and
- Draught proofing materials.

The SHH team are also identifying the need for winter warmth packs/practical interventions to for households, who've not specifically been referred for a winter warmth pack. Provision of this practical support will be complimented with extra/ additional access to utility top-ups for prepayment meter customers via tEC referrals to SCRATCH.

Unmet demand

We've seen a significant increase in demand for support which is beyond current capacity to provide initial guidance and advice through our Advice in Southampton commitments. This is primarily a result of households seeking affordable warmth guidance when applying for Household Support Fund assistance (self or agency led). **Since 1st April 2022 we have received 4,650 referrals** through this pathway and we've been working hard to respond to this unmet demand.

In response to this unmet demand, we have:

- Redesigned our website to improve digital access to information and guidance (live since early October. The new website, combined with our winter communications and marketing campaign work has resulted in **an 120 % increase in web sessions compared to the same time last year;**
- Continually assessed our processes and support approach to ensure we are able to work as efficiently as possible, helping clients to resolve their own issues where appropriate and prioritising in-depth support for our most vulnerable clients; and
- Secured additional funding via the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme to increase our capacity for phone and community-based advice provision. We're are currently training new recruits and expect them to be ready to support local residents in January 2023.

Energy efficiency/low carbon measures

A key focus of the Healthy Homes service casework is supporting clients to understand the potential energy efficiency and low carbon improvements that can be made to their home and securing grant funding for these works; assisting them from enquiry to post-installation. The SHH team explore national and local funding schemes including:

- Better Care and Carbon offset funding;
- ECO4 (including ECOflex);
- Warmer Homes (LAD/HUG);
- Disabled facilities funding;
- Boiler Upgrade Scheme; and
- Discretionary funding from a grant-making foundation for measures outside of the scope of SHH

A multi-measure/whole house, fabric first approach is undertaken when looking at potential home energy improvements. Eligible measures may include:

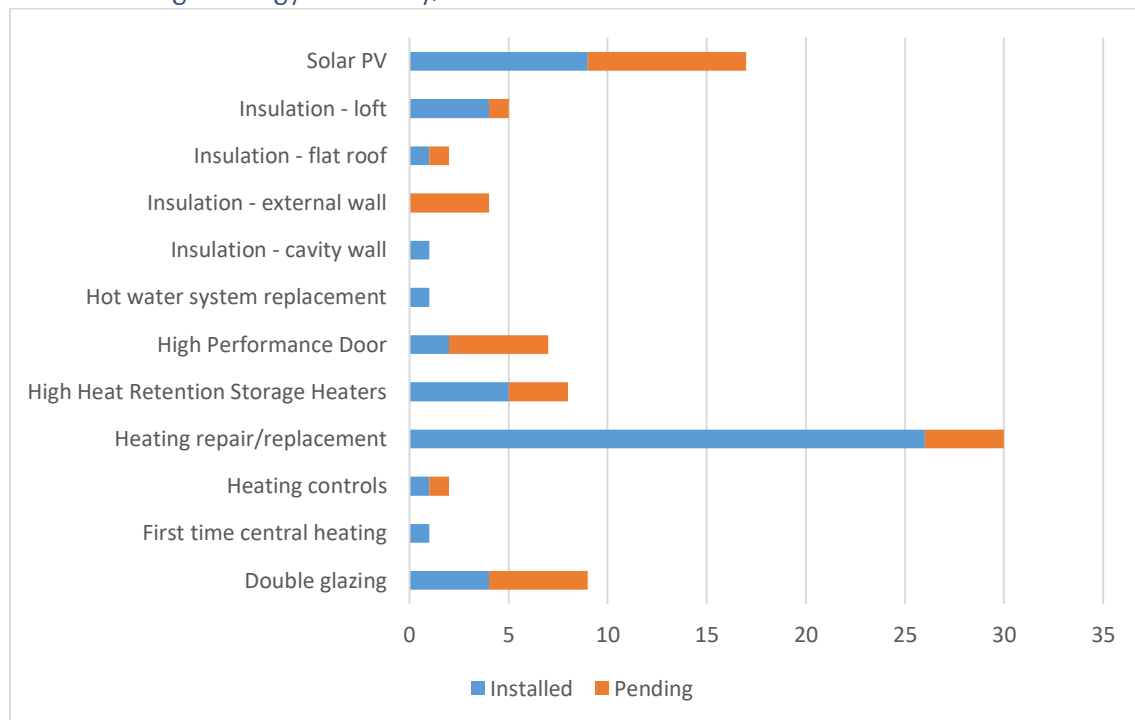
1. Insulation: cavity wall, external wall, internal wall, loft, room-on-roof, flat roof, underfloor
2. Heating system (repairs or replacements) and first-time central heating, including:
 - Boilers and radiators or underfloor heating;
 - Heat pumps;
 - Warm air systems;
 - Storage heaters (high heat retention);
 - Heating control upgrades and/or adjustments;
 - Hot water system repairs or replacements;
3. Door and/or window repairs or replacement where this represents a risk of excess cold or a risk of high energy bills
4. Renewable electricity or hot water systems
5. Essential enabling works including damp treatment/preventative works, ventilation improvements and plumbing, where appropriate.

The team have been working closely with 138 households to explore opportunities for domestic energy improvements and secure grant funding for these works to be delivered. Over the past nine months 53 households have benefitted 66 measures from heating, insulation, solar PV and glazing/door measures. 11% of households also required enabling works to ensure the interventions could be delivered. Table 2 provides a breakdown and chart 4 provides a breakdown of the measure mix.

Table 2. Energy efficiency measures progress

	No. of Households	No of measures	Estimated lifetime energy bill savings (£)	Estimated lifetime carbon savings (tCO _{2e})
Installed, year to date	53	66	245,003	1,158.61
Pending (funding committed)	26	32	159,597	301.60

Chart 4. Large energy efficiency/low carbon measures



In addition, the team have been developing relationships with various installers, following in response to the Council's aspirations to maximise delivery of measures for low income and vulnerable households, utilising its own discretionary funding. There is potential for installers to signpost large volumes of households to the service for advice and grant funding for improvements including Solar PV, flat roof insulation and external wall insulation.

Current barriers/challenges include:

- Solar PV installers being incredibly busy with works scheduled until March 2023;
- Installer uncertainty around ECO works being rejected following completion (due to changes under ECO4), resulting in non-payment; and
- Limited progress confirming potential for SCC shortfall funding to ensure high costs LAD/HUG works are undertaken. We are liaising with PCC and Agility Eco on this matter.

Managing these relationships is key to maximising the number of households supported with measures and utilising Better Care and Carbon Offset monies. Installers have highlighted the importance of certainty going forward both in terms of potential number of households that can be supported and how long funding will be available, if they engage closely with the SHH service.

We're discussing these opportunities and challenges with the SCC contract manager in the coming weeks.

Case studies

Private tenant with no fixed, working heating

About the client: Working age client who lives alone, privately rents his property and lives with multiple impairments.

The situation: The client was referred to us by Home Group (who were helping him with his debt) to see if we could help him with a top-up voucher. He was not eligible for a voucher as he did not have a prepayment meter, but on further investigation we found that he had had no fixed heating for some time and was struggling to stay warm, rationing his energy consumption and relying on expensive on-peak plug-in electric heaters. He was worried he would have to move out of the property due to the unaffordable bills.

Our support: We spoke to the client to check he was receiving help with his debt (Homegroup) and benefits (SARC) and provided him with a food bank voucher. We then explained that funding may be available to improve the heating in the property, as long as the landlord had met his minimum legal obligations. We subsequently spoke to the landlord and helped the landlord obtain some quotes from Buy With Confidence installers. The landlord very quickly installed the client's preferred type of fixed heaters (high heat retention storage heaters) after our discussion.

When discussing his situation, the client mentioned that his neighbour was also struggling with the cold and regularly had to call an ambulance as he was very worried about him. The neighbour did not have a phone number, and the client told us that he did not want to speak to us directly, but we obtained consent to make a referral to Adult Services to ensure he received the support he needed. We also sent the neighbour a letter offering our support.

We are hoping to help this client with insulation in the future, but there are currently too many barriers to this with current grant schemes and private rented sector legislation.

Total interactions: 91

Outcomes: New fixed heating installed following our involvement. Food bank voucher. Referral of neighbour to adult services.

Cost of living energy payment query

About the client: Working age client who owns her home and lives alone, and has been supported by the Southampton Healthy Homes team for a few years, during which time she has suffered a bereavement. She receives support from SpectrumCIL and lives with a chronic mental health condition.

The situation: A previous client of ours, the client contacted us in November 2022 over concerns she had not received cost of living energy payment onto her pre-payment meter. She was finding this problem particularly distressing.

Our support: We have provided a range of support to this client over the years, including helping her to access a heating upgrade, energy efficiency measures, solar panels, utility discounts and food and energy vouchers. We also referred her to CAS for a benefits check. During this most recent interaction, we helped her to speak to her supplier to resolve the issue with her payment being added to her meter. Despite assurances, the issue was not resolved after our first call, and it took a few long calls to the supplier and client before the credit was successfully added to the client's meter. This was distressing for the client, so she was very grateful for our support.

Total interactions: 12 (this time with client and her energy supplier, Boost)

Outcomes: £66 voucher successfully added to the client's meter following our support.

Client feedback

100% of survey respondents were satisfied with the service and that their situation had improved significantly since seeking help from us.

Our clients told us:

"Absolutely first class. Very helpful and professional, I am so pleased that your services were recommended and that I followed it up. It has and will continue to make an enormous difference to our way of life now and for years to come knowing we can have peace of mind in being able to heat our home beneficially to us but also energy efficiently."

"Our advisor was friendly and professional. [Adviser] spent lots of time on our situation. He was very thorough, knowledgeable and a great help when we didn't know who to turn to for help."

Asked to describe any changes to health and wellbeing following involvement with the Southampton Healthy Homes Service one client responded: *"Really very uplifting mentally and obviously much more comfortable physically."*