

# **Child Rights and Wellbeing Screening Sheet for 2035 Heat Networks Target**

November 2023

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## 1. Brief Summary

The Heat Networks (Scotland) Act 2021 (“the 2021 Act”) sets targets for the amount of thermal energy to be supplied by heat networks, requiring this to reach 2.6 Terawatt hours (TWh) of output by 2027 and 6 TWh of output by 2030. These figures equate to approximately 3% and 8% of current non-electrical heat demand respectively.

Under Section 92 of the 2021 Act, Scottish Ministers must – by 1 October 2023 – lay a draft of the Scottish statutory instrument containing regulations specifying a 2035 target relating to the combined supply of thermal energy by heat networks in Scotland (referred to below as the 2035 target).

Section 92 of the 2021 Act also states that Scottish Ministers may modify any heat network target specified within the 2021 Act.

Consulting on the 2035 target was one of the actions set out in the Heat Networks Delivery Plan<sup>1</sup>, which sits in the context of wider heat decarbonisation policy, in particular, the Heat in Buildings Strategy. This Strategy highlighted that over the coming years the Scottish Government proposes a focus on so-called no-and low-regrets strategic technologies. These are the technological solutions where cost uncertainty is low and we already understand the costs of installation and running costs for consumers. Heat networks is one such technology outlined in the strategy. Detail on the other technologies (including energy efficiency) and the approach to those can be found in the Strategy.

A Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment and a screening report were carried out for the Heat in Buildings Strategy and the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill respectively, therefore reference to previous reports has been made where appropriate.

Our ambition for the heat networks sector includes, as set out in the Heat Networks Delivery Plan, that the sector delivers affordable clean heat, supporting delivery of emission reduction and fuel poverty targets.

Our Fuel Poverty Strategy was published in December 2021 and sets out actions to tackle each of the four drivers of fuel poverty: poor energy efficiency of the home; high energy costs; low household income; and how energy is used in the home. We will work with the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel, appointed by Ministers in December 2021, as we bring forward regulation under the 2021 Act so that it supports efforts to eradicate fuel poverty and to ensure it does not adversely impact those in or at risk of fuel poverty.

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<sup>1</sup> [Heat Networks Delivery Plan](#)

## 2. What aspects of the policy/measure will affect children and young people up to the age of 18?

**The Articles of the UNCRC and the child wellbeing indicators under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 apply to all children and young people up to the age of 18, including non-citizen and undocumented children and young people.**

While the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill was being developed, an EQIA (Equalities impact assessment) was conducted, identifying that the Bill's provisions were unlikely to affect different age groups, and where they would the focus was predominantly on older people. Policy proposals were also reviewed against the Articles of the UNCRC (UN Convention on the Rights of Children) and the child wellbeing indicators under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. It was concluded that there were no specific aspects of the Bill which would impact children and young people.

However, the aim to increase heat network deployment across Scotland can stimulate change in the technology used to supply heat to some households. Some of the buildings affected by the change may be occupied by families with children and young people. Additionally, some of the public buildings such as schools or hospitals may also be connected to the networks. It is likely therefore, that the buildings which are occupied or used by children or young people may have different heating systems in the future and at the point of change of those heating systems there may be disruption to those building users.

## 3. What likely impact – direct or indirect – will the policy/measure have on children and young people?

**'Direct' impact refers to policies/measures where children and young people are directly affected by the proposed changes, e.g. in early years, education, child protection or looked after children (children in care).**

**'Indirect' impact refers to policies/measures that are not directly aimed at children**

**but will have an impact on them. Examples include: welfare reforms, parental leave, housing supply, or local transport schemes.**

In reviewing whether a CRWIA was necessary for the Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill, the published screening report<sup>2</sup> concluded that the Bill may result in some indirect impacts on children connected to:

- A change in heating system in some buildings occupied or used by children;
- Potential savings on heating bills;
- Greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

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<sup>2</sup> [Heat Networks \(Scotland\) Bill : Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment \(CRWIA\) \(ioe.ac.uk\)](https://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/heat-networks-scotland-bill-child-rights-and-wellbeing-impact-assessment-crwia/)

The first of these impacts was seen to come with potential disruption due to refurbishment. While this will be further explored below (having arisen as an impact in a CRWIA for the Heat in Buildings Strategy) the screening process for the Bill concluded that the long-term positive impacts of heat network installation would benefit occupants. Regarding the Articles of the UNCRC, the below were found to be relevant to the Bill:

- Article 27 – Adequate standard of living – whereby reliable and affordable heating systems will help to provide children with a warm home where the standard is supporting their physical, mental and social development.
- Article 24 – Health and health services – by supplying buildings used and/or occupied by children with reliable and low carbon heat, the increased deployment of heat networks may have a positive influence on the health of children and young people.

However, the impacts of the Bill are indirect and therefore any benefits will be reliant on the deployment of the technology and the quality of the systems installed.

Further details are available in the published CRWIA screening report for the Bill.

The Heat in Buildings Strategy (HBS) was published in November 2021, and constitutes the overarching framework within which the Heat Networks Delivery Plan (HNDP) and resultant 2035 target consultation has been produced. Alongside the HBS, a CRWIA was conducted and published<sup>3</sup>. This assessment concluded that:

- The HBS complies with the UNCRC
- There will be an overall positive impact on children and young people if the Strategy is successful in achieving its goals. (Potential positive impacts included health benefits from reduced in building gas boilers).
- Any potential negative impacts identified are expected to be short term and mitigating actions are identified.

The potential negative impacts highlighted by the HBS CRWIA which are relevant to heat networks and so the 2035 target relate to specific groups of children and young people:

Children with a disability:

- Access and disruption – potential for greater disruption in homes when carrying out installation work; homes may have been adapted for accessibility and there is therefore a need to ensure changes do not negatively affect access/space/layout; disabled people and families often live in poorer quality houses and have additional needs to be met through retrofit process, which can make it harder for providers and installers to reach these households – incentives to deliver targets at low cost have resulted in these households being side lined for support.
- Potential for increased costs – households with a disabled member have higher rates of poverty, below average wealth, increased living costs, and are

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<sup>3</sup> [Heat in buildings strategy: child rights and wellbeing impact assessment - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultations-petitions/html/2021/heat-in-buildings-strategy-child-rights-and-wellbeing-impact-assessment)

less likely to be in work. They are also likely to have higher heating and additional retrofit needs (as above), which can increase installation costs

Poverty:

- Child poverty and fuel poverty – we are continuing to build the evidence base on the interactions between our fuel poverty, child poverty and climate commitments, and are applying that knowledge to our policy design and to our programmes, mitigating any risk of unintended consequences, and tracking progress and learning by doing in order to adjust immediately where unintended consequences nevertheless arise.

More detail is available in the published HBS CRWIA - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/heat-buildings-strategy-child-rights-wellbeing-impact-assessment/>.

#### 4. Which groups of children and young people will be affected?

**Under the UNCRC, ‘children’ can refer to: individual children, groups of children, or children in general. Some groups of children will relate to the groups with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010: disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. ‘Groups’ can also refer to children by age band or setting, or those who are eligible for special protection or assistance: e.g. preschool children, children in hospital, children in rural areas, looked after children, young people who offend, victims of abuse or exploitation, child migrants, or children living in poverty.**

As outlined above, the CRWIA conducted for the HBS found that certain groups of children and young people were more likely to be affected by the transition to low and zero carbon heating. The groups found to be impacted by the HBS as a whole were:

- Children with enhanced heating needs such as those with a disability or illness or babies and very young children.
- Children in families of the six child poverty priority family types most at risk of poverty.
- Children in families in or at risk of fuel poverty.
- Children living in care.

#### 5. Is a Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment required?

Please state if a CRWIA will be carried out or not. Please explain your reasons.

**No.** As well as the screening exercise conducted for the Bill, a CRWIA was conducted for the Heat in Buildings Strategy, which is the overarching framework within which the HNBP and subsequent 2035 target has been produced. Further assessment at this time would not yield any additional insights.

The relevant potential negative impacts found in this assessment are noted above – these are all expected to be short term and mitigations are being/will be put in place:

- Quality assurance and skills – working to ensure delivery programmes do not unfairly disadvantage household with disabled children, seeking to minimise any negative impact on access/space/layout requirements – to be achieved through adoption of PAS 2035/30 standards, which includes pre install inspections covering access requirements.
- Cost and delivery – delivery programmes will consider additional costs which may be incurred to meet additional needs of disabled families.
- Guiding principles – underpinning the commitment that no one is left behind in the heat transition, ensuring actions will only be taken forward here they are found to have no detrimental impact on fuel poverty rates, unless additional mitigating actions can be put in place.

## 6. Sign & Date

Policy Lead Signature & Date of Sign Off:  
Suzanne Le Miere  
Heat of Heat Networks Policy  
15 February 2023

Deputy Director Signature & Date of Sign Off:  
PP James Hemphill  
on behalf of Sue Kearns, Deputy Director  
03 March 2023



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