LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

FUEL POVERTY (TARGET, DEFINITION AND STRATEGY) (SCOTLAND) BILL CALL FOR VIEWS

SUBMISSION FROM CHANGEWORKS

Changeworks welcomes the Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) Bill as part of a long-term strategy to eradicate fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency. Changeworks submitted a full response to the draft Fuel Poverty Strategy published in June 2018 and will not be repeating the majority of the feedback already provided. Comments below cover two areas within the strategy that Changeworks believe require particular attention.

1) Changeworks agrees there is a compelling need for a new definition for fuel poverty and is supportive of the use of a Minimum Income Standard (MIS) to help define fuel poverty. However, the need for MIS to include a remote, rural uplift was well made by the Scottish Government’s expert panel and we would encourage its adoption in the new definition. Without such an uplift, the definition will fail to identify remote rural fuel poverty and subsequent funding will not find its way to the most deserving householders.

2) Changeworks recommends a strengthening in the importance of local organisations delivery, in supporting communities with locally based fuel poverty advice services and the complimentary nature of this work with the Home Energy Scotland (HES) services. As a supplier of HES services Changeworks is pleased to see the role that HES plays in supporting householders in fuel poverty as an integral part of the draft Strategy. However, whilst the Strategy makes mention of valuing the knowledge and expertise of local organisations, the main focus appears to be about developing relationships to increase the referral pathways to HES. HES provides a wide spectrum of advice and referrals to other services such as the Citrus switching check, but HES does not provide fuel debt or advocacy support that many people require. At present HES can make referrals to local organisations that do provide this in-depth support which compliments the HES service. With the draft Strategy focussing on the role of HES there is a real risk that funders of local organisations, such as trusts and grant making bodies, will remove their funding for fuel poverty advice services delivered by local organisations. The resulting impact will be a decrease in support for fuel poor householders across Scotland and a decrease in people receiving the fuel debt and advocacy support they need.