The Home Insulation and Energy Systems (HIES)

Consumer Code of Practice

Audit

November 2025

Background information

The Home Insulation and Energy Systems Contractors Scheme (HIES) is a consumer protection organisation. Set up in March 2012, it was established to develop an enhanced level of protection for consumers in the field of "renewables" (the installation of renewable energy systems).

Consumers who purchase systems from HIES members receive, free of charge:- Deposit & Stage Payment Protection (up to 25% of the contract value or a maximum of £5,000 which ever is the lesser); an insurance backed guarantee; mediation service where any problems arising with the member company are dealt with; access to industry inspectors and professional mediators. HIES are an approved body for Alternative Dispute Resolution. HIES members are accredited installers.

The annual fee for membership of HIES is £695 (plus VAT). As of 23 October 2025, HIES had 906 members.

Audit Process

A qualified Trading Standards Practitioner from the Chartered Trading Standards Institute carried out an on-site audit. The audit focused on the following areas:

- Member application process including checks carried out on prospective businesses
- Member auditing - content and process
- Terms and conditions and other pre-contractual Information
- Marketing and advertising by member businesses
- Sanctions for non-complaint member businesses
- Customer service provisions (including support for vulnerable consumers)
- Consumer complaints process (including ADR)
- Customer satisfaction
- Training provided by code members
- Outstanding issues/matters arising from the last audit

Audit Summary

HIES remain concerned about the removal of the requirement for installers to be members of a Consumer Code (i.e. HIES or RECC) to be able to certified by Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS). This has been confirmed by MCS, but still unconfirmed are the financial protection or consumer protection elements of the redeveloped MCS scheme. They anticipate this will be confirmed in the next few months.

Since September 2024, HIES have a Primary Authority arrangement with Buckinghamshire and Surrey Trading Standards Service (Bucks & Surrey) (after moving from a different Primary Authority). They are happy with this new relationship and they feel it is working very well.

Member Application Process

In the year 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2025, HIES received 436 membership enquiries. Of the 436 applications 187 were accepted as new members, 122 applications were withdrawn, either due to a lack of communication from the applicant or they had a gateway fail at Accreditation. 122 were disqualified and of the current 300 open applications (please note this captures all applicants currently open not just between 1st October 2024 and 30th September 2025):-

253 documents received or awaiting further documentation

47 approved in principle

HIES have a robust, comprehensive and systematic accreditation policy that is followed for all applicants. The policy is summarised in a document that is used internally to advise and inform colleagues of the HIES approach, the requirements of the processes and procedures relating to the accreditation of members and a comprehensive scoring system for applications. It is also used externally to demonstrate how HIES manage risk effectively and details the processes in place to help achieve that.

The process is as follows:-

1. Application form received

2. Welcome email sent to request all documentation; contract, quotation, workmanship guarantee, complaints policy, insurances (Employers and Public Liability), bank statements, management accounts, subcontractor qualifications, director ID & address (where applicable, i.e. Sole Traders).

3. Once all documents are received, an internet search and document check is completed. This includes the following:

Creditsafe check - this includes incorporated date, dissolved/associated businesses, credit score, net worth, any CCJs or any other negative information from the past 12 months;

Internet searches for positive/negative comments - i.e. Trustpilot, Google reviews, Facebook, Yell, Checkatrade. Phone number(s) checked on ‘who calls me’ for any cold-calling;

Memorandum of Understanding[1] check - whether they have previously been a member of Renewable Energy Consumer Code and any adverse information which may impact HIES’ decision to proceed;

Check on company website to ensure no false advertising of memberships or accreditations;

Checks for certifications for subcontractors (if applicable) and certificates the applicant may have obtained pre-application;

Director checks for any allegations of fraud, convictions, or undesirable trading practices. A review of associated/dissolved companies and what industry they were in, whether they traded, how long for and the reason for any dissolutions and where possible, determine if there was any consumer detriment.

4. Document review:

Contract/Quotation – Ensure clarity and fairness of terms and transactions of the documents and that they include dispute resolution service details, how data is used, cancellation rights and a breakdown of goods purchased;

Workmanship Guarantee – Ensure the duration, suitability and the scope of the document meets the HIES Code of Practice;

Complaints Policy – Ensure clarity and fairness of the document and that it provides details of the HIES dispute resolution service;

Insurance – Ensure adherence to minimum cover requirements as per the HIES Code of Practice;

Bank statement/management accounts – Reviewed to ensure financial stability for consumer protection and fraud prevention.

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[1] The memorandum of understanding between HIES and the Renewable Energy Consumer Code, (the other CTSI code sponsor in the same sector), requires that both organisations share information about applicants to ensure that there is no “code hopping” by businesses where their application to join elsewhere is refused, or members have been expelled from a Code.

6. Prior to onboarding, final checks are made to ensure insurances are in date, there have been no negative changes that have occurred during the process.

If an application is refused, applicants have the option to seek an appeal under the HIES Internal Review Panel.

Existing Member Inspections/Audit

HIES operate four types of audits, their Annual Health Checks (AHC):-

1. Lite
2. Standard
3. Enhanced
4. Onsite

Lite - This is completed once per year if the member has not registered any domestic contracts in the last 12 months and has been a member for at least 12 months. This consists of 4 questions.

71 have been issued, 70 responses have been received and 19 members left HIES during the process.

Compliance Ratings – 50% to 74% - 19 members; 75% to 100% - 51 members.

Standard - This is completed once per year where the member has registered a consumer contract with HIES, it would be upgraded to an Enhanced if defined risks were identified e.g. unfair terms in the contract documentation, any significant changes to the business that the member makes HIES aware of, any concerning sales practices. This consists of 9 questions and the submission of documents to support their answers.

375 were issued, 355 were received, 144 audits were completed, 60 members left during the process.

Compliance Ratings - 25% to 49% - 6 members; 50% to 74% - 97 members; 75% to 100% - 41 members.

Enhanced - 1% of members who register contracts are randomly selected. They must have been a member for at least 12 months and not had an Enhanced or Comprehensive in the last 2 years. Or any installer who gets upgraded from a Standard audit based on their responses.

7 have been issued (2 of these are part of the 1% random selection). The rest were upgraded from Standard. 6 have been received, 3 have been audited.

Compliance Ratings - 50% to 74% - 2 members; 75% to 100% - 1 member.

Onsite Audit – this is used by HIES to get to the heart of issues occurring with a member business where these have not been previously resolved through the ongoing Monitoring regime. An onsite audit can be arranged at any time and the member is provided with details of the visit in advance. One onsite audit has been completed since the last CTSI audit. These are not scored.

The AHC responses from members are reviewed by the audit team who also carry out some further checks on the member. These responses (and results of the further checks) are used to calculate a Compliance Rating.

The member receives an Annual Health Check Report detailing their Compliance Rating along with any mandatory or advisory actions required. These generally relate to requirements in the HIES Standard Terms of Membership and the HIES Code of Practice. The Compliance Rating is calculated by scoring the answers to the questions and desktop analysis. The score is converted into a Compliance Rating Percentage. Both scores are shared with the member in their AHC Report.

Once members have received their AHC report they are given two weeks to complete any mandatory actions. Any member that fails to complete the mandatory actions within the deadline is referred to the Monitoring team for follow-up. The compliance team will support the member to ensure all actions are completed. If the member still fails to complete the actions, the 'Minded to Terminate' process is invoked.

Membership Withdrawal and Sanctions for Non-Compliant Member Businesses

In any event where a member is considered not to be in compliance with the HIES Code of Practice the matters, unless severe, are resolved as above, by the Monitoring team.

Where the matters are severe or the member fails to complete the action, the 'Minded to Terminate' process is invoked.

If the member is required to leave HIES, they must cease to use the HIES & CTSI logo within 30 days and HIES will inform various bodies within the renewables sector including MCS[2].

Marketing and Advertising by Member Businesses

HIES members must, within six calendar months of their membership start date, display the HIES Scheme logo on all customer-facing documents, stationery,

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[2] MCS refers to the Microgeneration Certification Scheme. It is a requirement of the Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive scheme that all heating systems are certified by MCS. MCS certifies both products and installation companies to help ensure that Microgeneration products are installed to a high standard.

websites, vehicles and in all radio & TV advertising, on demand, social media or internet commercials.

HIES supply all members with the HIES and CTSI logos. The HIES Installer Digital Marketing Pack is communicated to all members via email and is also available on the Installer Hub to download at any time. Members use of this is checked during the audit process to ensure they are using the correct version. This includes website checks and any documents to be shared with consumers. This ensures marketing of HIES is clear, current and accurately displayed.

When members leave the scheme, checks are made to ensure all references to HIES have been removed from their website.

HIES members are only permitted to make performance calculations for all home insulation, energy generating, energy storing or energy saving products that are based on the applicable standard calculations approved for use by:

The Microgeneration Certification Scheme (or any equivalent approved by HIES); or

The Flexible Energy Oversight Registration Body (or any equivalent approved by HIES); or

The Energy Performance Validation Scheme (or any equivalent approved by HIES)

Customer Service Provisions

HIES have an Equality and Safeguarding Policy drafted after consultation with HIES's previous Primary Authority West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service and an HR consultant. This is shared with all members.

Prior to acceptance, the applicant's terms and conditions, cancellation rights, customer complaints process, deposit policy, workmanship guarantee document and insurances are all reviewed.

HIES has four sets (A, B, C & D) of model Ts&Cs available for use by members, covering four different contract types. These were drafted with the assistance of HIES former Primary Authority (WYJS) and have been recently reviewed by HIES current Primary Authority (Bucks & Surrey) who suggested some small amendments. These have been actioned and the new sets of Ts&Cs were launched in June 2025.

Consumer Complaints Process

HIES provide members with a model complaints policy.

HIES monitors the number of complaints received (by HIES) about each member compared to the number of installations registered with HIES, this then gives a complaint ratio. Members with a complaint ratio of less than 5% are considered within an acceptable tolerance. Just over 93% of members have either complaint ratios under 5% or zero complaints.

HIES aspire to deliver industry leading dispute resolution services for consumers and members of their scheme by providing a single point of contact for consumer complaints.

Professionally trained mediators are employed to help resolve disputes. Mediators can commission independent forensic defect analysis reports at no cost to the consumer or member (in most cases) should they deem it necessary to help resolve the dispute.

If a dispute is not resolved in 1st stage mediation, it can be escalated to 2nd stage mediation where the process becomes more formal. This is the internal Alternative Dispute Resolution service provided by HIES (and approved by CTSI) and it is used to resolve disputes between consumers and traders, hopefully preventing the need to go to court.

HIES use the Dispute Resolution Ombudsman to investigate and settle any disputes between members and their customers that have not been settled at an earlier stage. Consumers have free access to the Dispute Resolution Ombudsman (HIES covers the fees for this). The Ombudsman's decision is binding on the member.

Customer Satisfaction and Feedback

A survey for consumers to complete on their experience with the member is sent by email. This has recently been amended following feedback from consumers and the point in time it is sent has been changed from the day of installation to 30 days after installation. This is intended to provide results that better reflect the consumer's experience of the new system.

All surveys are uploaded onto the members accounts and HIES monitor the survey scores. HIES conducts continuous monitoring of the results through ISO 9001 Quality Management Reviews and through their bespoke Reputational Monitoring tool.

A total of 6,294 (out of 23,408 sent) customer satisfaction questionnaires were completed and forwarded to HIES between 1st April 2025 and 30th October 2025. This represents an impressive return rate of 26.89%. This significant number of responses demonstrates that HIES has a meaningful data set to draw from when measuring customer satisfaction and feedback. HIES have recently introduced entry into a prize draw as an incentive for consumers to return the customer satisfaction survey to HIES.

Training Provided to Code Members

HIES have developed a comprehensive suite of template documents for members' use. These include model Ts&Cs for different types of installations, an Equality and Safeguarding Policy, a model complaints policy, a Quotation Template, example marketing materials etc. Also provided is a checklist to assist in the identifying of vulnerable consumers.

The Business Development Managers conduct a welcome induction session with new members by Teams or phone. This includes how the registration system works and how to ensure consumers are protected. The importance of the Code of Practice and Standard Terms of Membership are discussed and links to the Code of Practice and Standard Terms of Membership are shared by email following the session. The installer has agreed to these previously during the completion of their online application form.

Members are reminded that they have access to the HIES Code of Practice via the HIES website. If any updates are made to the HIES Code of Practice, members are emailed via e-shot and the Quality Department answers any queries should they arise.

Conclusions

HIES constantly evolve in how they ensure their members are monitored and how they provide enhanced consumer protection for their customers.

The HIES Consumer Code continues to comply with the criteria of the CTSI Consumer Code Approval Scheme.