

ECO Help to Heat Statement of Intent for Flexible Eligibility

Northumberland County Council

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Version 2

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Business/Grants/Grants-Funding.aspx#grantsfunding>

If you are unsure who the local council is for your property you can check online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

Introduction

Northumberland County Council will continue to work closely with energy companies, installers and customers to maximise the input of Flexible Eligibility ECO on fuel poor households.

Under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Regulations local authorities can set their own criteria for eligibility for funding for domestic energy efficiency measures. This funding is aimed at those within a local authority most likely to be in fuel poverty.

This statement takes into account NICE recommendations on how to reduce the risk of death and ill health associated with living in a cold home. NICE guideline [NG6] Published date: March 2015 <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6>

The aim is to help meet a range of public health and other goals. These include:

- Reducing preventable excess winter death rates.
- Improving health and wellbeing among vulnerable groups.
- Reducing pressure on health and social care services.
- Reducing 'fuel poverty' and the risk of fuel debt or being disconnected from gas and electricity supplies (including self-disconnection).
- Improving the energy efficiency of homes.

Improvements to make homes warmer may also help reduce unnecessary fuel consumption (although where people are living in cold homes because of fuel poverty their fuel use may increase). In addition, such improvements may reduce absences from work and school that result from illnesses caused by living in a cold home.

The health problems associated with cold homes are experienced during 'normal' winter temperatures, not just during extremely cold weather. (An increase in death rates due to a drop in temperature varies across England but can happen when temperatures drop below about 6°C.)

Northumberland's Housing Strategy 2019-22 highlights Northumberland's ageing population. 'Housing provision that meets the needs of older people has significant benefits to their health and wellbeing while easing social care and NHS budgets. Properly adapted and energy efficient housing can reduce the need for social care and improve wellbeing.'

Additional services and available support

The Priority Services Register is a free support service to help people in vulnerable situations. Energy suppliers and network operators offer it. Each keeps their own register. You need to contact your energy supplier or network operator to get on it.

Adult social care can assess applications from households where a disability or illness is making daily life difficult. They may award a disabled facilities grant towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable the disabled person to continue to live in the property. Where necessary the grants may be awarded to improve or provide a heating system in a home which is suitable to the needs of the disabled person or to adapt heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant>

Landlord Development forums (also known as the Private Landlords forums) are held across the region. The forums are an opportunity for landlords to keep up to date with regulations and legislation governing the private sector.

The council's approach to the Help to Heat flexible eligibility criteria (as outlined below) has been taken to maximise the potential for funding, however, fitting the criteria within this statement of intent does not guarantee that any individual household will benefit from energy saving improvements. The final decision on funding rests with energy suppliers and will depend on:

- i) The survey carried out and installation costs calculated,
- ii) the energy savings that can be achieved for a property, and
- iii) whether suppliers have achieved their ECO targets or require further measures to meet their ECO targets (this will affect the amount of funding available through the scheme)

How the LA intends to identify eligible households

Households are considered eligible for flexible eligibility ECO if they are at risk of living in fuel poverty (FP) or a low income household, with at least one household member vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home (LIVC). Flexible eligibility only applies to private tenure so a property must be privately owned or rented.

Where potential works have been identified, the council will consider a postcode based approach on a case by case basis if the area falls in to the top 10 most deprived areas in the country based on indices of deprivation.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-indices-of-deprivation>

A. Criteria for identifying households that are living in fuel poverty (FP)

A household is in fuel poverty if they are on a lower income and unable to heat their home for a reasonable cost.

To qualify as fuel poor, through Northumberland's flexible eligibility criteria, households need to meet one of the Low Income criteria and one of the High Cost criteria.

Criteria	FP Eligibility
Low Income	Gross household income <£30,000/year Or In receipt of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, or the housing element of Universal Credit
High Cost	Property EPC rating of D, E, F or G Or Boiler broken down and/or beyond economical repair or has no central heating system

B. Criteria for identifying low income and vulnerability to cold (LIVC).

Households will be considered a low income household, and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home, if they meet the Low Income criteria **and** someone in the household meets one of the Health and vulnerability criteria.

The income threshold for vulnerable households has been uplifted to take account of potential additional costs experienced (e.g. medical treatments / equipment and care, higher energy use, transport to appointments etc.)

Criteria	LIVC Eligibility
Low Income	Gross household income <£36,000/year
Health and vulnerability criteria	Household member has a health condition made worse by cold, including but not limited to:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • chronic respiratory • cardio vascular • musculoskeletal illness • autoimmune deficiencies • cancer • poor mental health Household member of a vulnerable age, either:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aged 70 or over • aged 16 and under

Scheme requirements for Solid Wall Insulation (SWI) “in-fill” projects

The local authority intends to facilitate solid wall insulation schemes including households that are not in fuel poverty or vulnerable (‘in-fill’). Flexible eligibility only applies to private tenure, therefore all the properties on a declaration, including in-fill, must be private tenure.

Where a household does not meet the criteria for fuel poverty (outlined at A) or living on a low income and vulnerable to the cold (outlined at B), the local authority can declare a household as “in-fill” where they are:

- in the same terrace as
- in an immediately adjacent building to, or
- are in the same building as a household that does meet those criteria

In-fill is only allowed where a minimum percentage of households for which the LA is providing declarations are fuel poor (FP) or on a low income and vulnerable to the cold (LIVC), as set out in Table 1.

Not all the properties in one terrace need to be included in the SWI project in order for the project to be eligible under flexible eligibility.

Table 1 - Summary of the requirements for property types under in-fill

Property Type	LA declaration requirements	In-fill available
Project consisting of a pair of semi-detached houses or bungalows, or a building containing no more than two domestic premises	At least one of the two-properties must be declared by the LA as FP or LIVC (i.e. 50% of the properties are FP or LIVC).	The other property to which it is directly adjoined is eligible for solid wall insulation.
Project consisting of any premises that are contained in the same building (e.g. flats), immediately adjacent buildings (e.g. neighbouring detached properties) or in the same terrace	At least two in three properties on the list must be declared by the LA as Fuel Poor or LIVC (ie at least 66% of the properties are FP or LIVC)	The other (i.e. up to one third) of properties in the project are eligible for solid wall insulation, provided they are either in the same building, an immediately adjacent building or in the same terrace as the ones identified as FP or LIVC

Governance

Responsible officer

The officer below will be responsible for signing Declarations on behalf of the local authority.

Name: Kate Ershadi

Job title: Energy Systems Officer

Telephone: 01670 622275

Email: kate.ershadi@northumberland.gov.uk

Referrals route from fuel poverty/vulnerability/social care or health organisations

Referrals are expected from professional organisations that may come into contact with fuel poor or vulnerable households. Some examples include (but are not limited to) social workers, health visitors, occupational therapists, housing officers, environmental health, Community Action Northumberland, Citizens Advice Bureau, National Energy Action, local councillors, energy companies, and Communitas Energy CIC

Evidence, monitoring and reporting

- a. Anonymised data on the characteristics of households reached through ECO Flexible Eligibility will be reviewed annually;
- b. The data will include details of households assessed, how many were deemed eligible through fuel poverty, how many were deemed to be low income and vulnerable to the cold, and how many received heating and insulation improvements

Signature

Director signing on behalf of Northumberland County Council

Name:

M. J. Baker

Service Director

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'MJ Baker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Date:

26.07.21