

Vale of White Horse District Council Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

INTRODUCTION

Vale of White Horse District Council is committed to supporting residents vulnerable to fuel poverty and the effects of living in cold homes. Working with the National Energy Foundation (NEF) and the other Oxfordshire local authorities, the council has developed Better Housing Better Health (BHBH) – a single-point-of-contact health and housing referral service for people living in cold homes as recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines on excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes¹.

BACKGROUND

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation placed on energy suppliers by the Government to help households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures.

Under the current ECO scheme, energy suppliers can achieve a proportion of their obligation by installing energy saving measures in households declared eligible by local authorities. This mechanism, known as 'flexible eligibility', allows local authorities to set their own eligibility criteria to identify households they believe would benefit from ECO funding for energy efficiency improvements to their homes. Government guidance states that flexible eligibility criteria should identify households either in fuel poverty or with occupants on low incomes and vulnerable to the health effects of cold homes.

Vale of White Horse District Council sees ECO Flexible Eligibility fitting well within the aims of the BHBH service and is happy to support its use to provide additional funding for energy efficiency measures to eligible residents in the district. This Statement of Intent sets out the council's eligibility criteria and how householders and suppliers can make applications to access the funding.

The funding can be used for the installation of an energy efficiency measure ('measures') such as cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, boiler repairs and first time central heating. This list is not exhaustive and the measures available will change over time.

HOW THE LOCAL AUTHORITY INTENDS TO IDENTIFY ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS

Government guidance states that flexible eligibility criteria should identify private tenure households that are:

¹ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng6>

- i. Fuel poor, especially those that are not in receipt of ECO qualifying benefits, and the estimated 20 per cent of fuel poor households that are not in receipt of any benefits; and
- ii. Low income households that are vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home.

Eligible households will therefore be those that are private tenure, on a low income, as defined below in the first income criteria, **and** meet any of the second vulnerability criteria.

First Eligibility Criteria: Income

Low income will be assessed against the values in the table below. Please note that these values may change from time to time.

| Household composition | | Gross annual household income | Monthly household income equivalent |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 adult | and no children | £16,500 | £1,375 |
| | and 1 child | £21,750 | £1,813 |
| | and 2 children | £27,000 | £2,250 |
| | and three children | £32,250 | £2,688 |
| | and four or more children | £37,500 | £3,125 |
| 2 adults | and no children | £24,750 | £2,063 |
| | and 1 child | £30,000 | £2,500 |
| | and 2 children | £35,250 | £2,938 |
| | and three children | £40,500 | £3,375 |
| | and four or more children | £45,750 | £3,813 |

Second Eligibility Criteria: Vulnerability

In addition to the first income criteria households must also fulfil one or more of the following second vulnerability criteria set out below:

BENEFITS

Non-means tested and other benefits can be used as a good indicator that a member of the household may be defined as vulnerable to fuel poverty or the effects of living in a cold home.

A household with a full-time resident in receipt of any of the below:

- A disability benefit (Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance)
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Benefit
- Carers Allowance

HEALTH

People with certain health conditions are particularly vulnerable to cold furthermore, many health conditions may be exacerbated by living in a cold home.

A household with a full-time resident who has one of the following long term and chronic health conditions:

- Cardiovascular condition (incl. coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, transient ischemic attack)
- Respiratory condition (incl. COPD, asthma)
- Neurological or neurobiological condition (incl. dementia, Parkinson's disease, MS, epilepsy, fibromyalgia, ME)
- Musculoskeletal conditions (incl. arthritis, limited mobility, recently attended hospital due to a fall)
- Blood conditions (incl. Sickle cell disease, thalassemia)
- Cancer
- Moderate to severe mental illness (incl. schizophrenia bipolar disorder and depression where receiving regular treatment)
- Severe learning disabilities
- Autoimmune or immunodeficiency diseases (e.g. lupus, diabetes, HIV)
- Terminally ill
- Other illness exacerbated by cold (confirmed by GP)
- Entitled to free prescriptions where otherwise chargeable

AGE

Age can also influence vulnerability to cold, with both older and younger residents being particularly adversely affected.

A household with a full-time resident who is:

- An adult aged 60 or over
- A child under the age of five

HOMES WITH A LOW ENERGY RATING

Some homes have characteristics which mean they inevitably use a lot of energy. These can be properties which have not already been upgraded or properties that are considered 'hard to treat'. Hard to treat homes are the most difficult to make energy efficient as conventional measures are unsuitable. These homes often include properties with solid walls, properties not connected to the gas network and properties with no lofts. Such properties are likely to be occupied by people who face high energy costs.

Homes with low energy ratings are those that:

- have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E, F or G and/or
- are a park home

ASSESSED BY BETTER HOUSING BETTER HEALTH

As part of the BHBH service, residents may be identified to have circumstances outside of the above. A final vulnerability criteria is therefore:

- Any household, where the residents are on a low income and where a full-time resident has been confirmed as eligible by the BHBH service.

STAND-ALONE CRITERIA

The council will also issue declarations for households which meet one of the following stand-alone criteria.

Solid Wall Insulation

Vale of White Horse District Council wants to support the installation of solid wall insulation in the district. The council will therefore issue declarations for those private tenure households (regardless of income and vulnerability) who fulfil the in-fill criteria as defined by Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). These criteria apply when a private household is in i) the same terrace as, ii) in an immediately adjacent building to or, iii) are in the same building as a household that meets the low income and vulnerability to cold criteria set out above.

Fuel Poverty

Vale of White Horse District Council will issue a declaration for any private tenure household which is confirmed as being in fuel poverty by the BHBH service. This will be calculated using the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) Fuel Poverty Calculator which is based on the official method of calculating fuel poverty by government².

GOVERNANCE AND PROCESS

Vale of White Horse District Council works with NEF to support residents vulnerable to fuel poverty and the effects of living in cold homes. NEF manage the Flexible Eligibility process on behalf of the council and the BHBH helpline is used to assess householder eligibility against the criteria set out above.

All eligible householders will be asked to complete a self-certification form and may be asked to provide documents in support of their eligibility. NEF will then seek a declaration from the council which enables the energy supplier to claim the ECO funding required to enable the requested energy efficiency measure to be installed.

Cynthia Calvert will sign off declarations and will audit three per cent of applications to ensure compliance with these criteria.

² www.gov.uk/government/publications/fuel-poverty-methodology-handbook-2013

| Position | Named individual | Responsibilities |
|------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| Chief Executive | Mark Stone | Signatory for Statement of Intent |
| Local authority contact | Cynthia Calvert | Signing Local Authority Declarations. Auditing three per cent applications. |
| National Energy Foundation contact | Matt Neal | Management of ECO Flex application process and NEF Approved Supplier Network. |

HOUSEHOLDER APPLICATION

Any Vale of White Horse resident who believes that they may be eligible for help under flexible eligibility should contact Better Housing Better Health on 0800 107 0044. BHBH will check your eligibility status and will supply the self-certification form to be completed. They will also be able to refer you to an assessor or installer to take the process further.

However, being eligible is not a guarantee that measures will be installed. A final decision on whether any individual household can benefit from energy saving improvements under ECO will be made by the energy suppliers or their agents/contractors. **Inclusion in a declaration issued by the council does not guarantee the installation of measures.**

Some measures can be fitted for free to eligible households. Other measures will require a customer contribution. Wherever possible, BHBH will aim to find additional funding for eligible households to reduce any customer contribution.

SUPPLIER NETWORK

Any supplier or installer who seeks a council declaration on behalf of an eligible resident will first need to be registered with the 'NEF Supplier Network'. The Network ensures that councils have information about the standards, practices and accreditations of installers working in their area reducing the risk of fraud, poor quality installations and the exploitation of vulnerable residents that the council is looking to assist via ECO Flexible Eligibility.

For further information about the Network and guidance on how to register, suppliers should contact bhbh@nef.org.uk

EVIDENCE, MONITORING AND REPORTING

BHBH will confirm eligibility on behalf of the council.

- i. Eligible residents will need to self-certify both their income and their secondary eligibility criteria.
- ii. NEF will report on a quarterly basis to Vale of White Horse District Council on which measures have been installed and their value. Should a customer contribution be required this will also be reported.
- iii. Vale of White Horse District Council will audit three per cent of applications on a quarterly basis to help prevent and detect fraud.

Please note that these reporting and monitoring procedures may be updated from time to time as a process of continual improvement.

SIGNATURE



Mark Stone, Chief Executive

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| Date | 4 October 2018 |
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| Web address | http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/housing/managing-your-home/improving-energy-efficiency/energy-saving-grants |