

Portsmouth City Council ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

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1. Introduction

Fuel poverty can cause low income and vulnerable households to live in unhealthy, cold homes; potentially pushing them further into debt. Portsmouth City Council wishes to utilise Flexible Eligibility to its fullest to help achieve our stated aims, as well as improving the health and wellbeing of their residents.

1.1. It should be noted that the final decision on whether any individual household is looking forward to delivering the new local authority ECO Flexible Eligibility for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Affordable Warmth grant as a means to help address this issue is still to be fully confirmed. This will allow the Council to provide affordable warmth assistance to fuel poor households that are not eligible under the existing criteria of 'low income'; but are felt to be vulnerable to the effects of cold.

Further details about Flexible Eligibility are set out in the Government's 'Energy Company Obligation (ECO): Help to Heat' consultation response document¹.

1.2. In Portsmouth there are a total of 88,263 households, of which 10,429 (11.8%) are in fuel poverty². This will increase as fuel prices rise, which they are predicted to do over the coming years². Previous research has shown that the highest proportionate rate of fuel poverty was found in the private rented sector and was associated with those households on a means tested benefit. Fratton and Southsea wards in Portsmouth had the highest fuel poverty rates.

1.3. 120 people died over the winter months in the Portsmouth area in 2013, according to latest statistics by the Office for National Statistics. Excess winter death rates are defined as the deaths occurring in the winter period, December to March, compared to the rest of the year. In common with other countries, in England and Wales more people die in winter than in summer.

1.4. ECO Flexible Eligibility will contribute towards the aims of the Council's Corporate Strategy, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Environmental Sustainability & Climate Strategy and Economic Strategy. This includes: enabling financial assistance to vulnerable and low income owner occupiers, reducing carbon emissions from the domestic sector, improving the numbers of energy efficient, safe, healthy and affordable homes to live in strengthening the local economy.

1. ECO: Help to Heat Flexible Eligibility 2017 p1.

2. DECC (2016) Sub-regional fuel poverty

3. BEIS (2016) Fossil Fuel Assumptions

1.5. To ensure that we can reach a wide and varied selection of homes within the Private Sector across the City, and are able to continue our important progress towards our goal of achieving a significant reduction in energy use in domestic homes across the City, it is important to continue and further develop our work with partners and use a number of different channels to ensure we reach out to all of our residents in a joined up and effective way. Some of our partnerships working to mitigate fuel poverty in the private sector are listed below:

Green Deal Communities Group: This builds on a previous work to deliver extensive external wall insulation (EWI) across the city of Portsmouth from our successful *Green Deal Communities* bid. This enabled us to install over 72 easy to treat measures (boiler replacement, loft and cavity wall insulation) and 69 external wall insulation across the city. *Central Heating Communities Fund* which enabled us to install first time central heating to 98 homes within Hampshire. *Local Energy Advice Programme (LEAP)*, utilised by a large number of local services, charities and organisations throughout the city offering advice on energy efficiency, fuel bills, and switching.

2. ECO Flexible Eligibility

Portsmouth City Council will utilise Flexible Eligibility to its fullest to help achieve our aims alongside improving the health and wellbeing of their residents. ECO Flexible eligibility is available to private sector households, including owner occupiers and private tenants, in line with the Government's guidance¹.

It should be noted that the final decision on whether any individual household can benefit from energy saving improvements under Affordable Warmth will be made by our obligated suppliers or their agents/contractors. Inclusion in a Declaration issued by the local authority to a supplier will not guarantee installation of measures, as the final decision will depend on i) survey carried out by suppliers agents/contractors and installation costs calculated, ii) the energy savings that can be achieved for a property, iii) whether suppliers have achieved their targets or require further measures to meet their ECO targets.

Potentially eligible households will need to apply through Portsmouth City Council's Energy Services Team in order to be assessed (Freephone 0800 052 2242 or email Housing.privatesector@portsmouthcc.gov.uk). The Energy Services Team will check eligibility in their initial conversation with the resident; they will also check that the resident is happy for their data to be shared with scheme partners. Portsmouth City Council will issue regular Declarations our Delivery Partners setting out those households that are eligible. The Delivery Partners will pass this information onto their ECO supplier through the ECO application process.

Identifying eligible households Portsmouth's will use the following eligibility criteria to identify households that may benefit from the installation of measures under 'Flexible Eligibility'. Criteria for identifying fuel poverty:

The resident

- In receipt of any means tested benefit.

And

- Living in a property with an EPC rating of E, F or G or in a property with a housing archetype likely to be E, F or G rated.

Identified as Low Income High Cost (LIHC) and a vulnerability to cold.

The resident

- In receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Attendance Allowance.
- On the Energy Companies' Priority Services register (those at most risk from the effects of a power cut).
- Has a pre-existing long term chronic condition such as: heart disease, stroke or transient ischaemic attack (TIA), asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or diabetes.
- Has dementia, learning disabilities or mental ill-health that reduces individual's ability to self-care
- Has a health condition that can be exacerbated by living in cold including,
 - i. cardiovascular conditions,
 - ii. respiratory conditions (in particular, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and childhood asthma),
 - iii. mental health conditions,
 - iv. disabilities,
 - v. terminally ill,
 - vi. suppressed immune systems (e.g. from cancer treatment or HIV)

Or

- Aged 65 and over, age 55+ and in receipt of a disability related benefit or registered disabled.
- Responsible for a child under 5 living at the property or is pregnant.
- Responsible for a child under 18 with a health need living at the property.

And

- Is living in a property with an EPC rating of E, F, or G or in a property with a housing archetype likely to be E, F or G rated.

In exceptional cases, not meeting the requirements above will be considered on a case by case basis.

3. Governance Officers responsible for signing “Local authority declarations”

Governance Officers responsible for signing “Local authority declarations” Portsmouth City Council Private Sector Housing Manager Bruce Lomax, Energy Advice Officer Angela Stiles, Energy Services Team Manager Andrew Waggott.

4. Referrals

Portsmouth City Council will identify eligible households through the various routes: - This could result from residents phoning or emailing the Help Desk, Energy Services Team following marketing or from a frontline worker.

General marketing; which includes advertising or editorial in the Council’s magazine to residents

Messages on Facebook, Twitter or in newsletters

Delivery Partner leafleting to properties near those with installations being carried out

Leaflets to community venues

Libraries or community events

In order to target its marketing towards those households that are vulnerable to the effects of cold, we will work closely with Public Health to identify routes to vulnerable households.

Training will be given to frontline Council staff and other agencies to referral, including housing and environmental health staff, health and social care workers, Telecare and Home Safety team, Age UK and CAB; in order to make them more able to identify those in risk of fuel poverty.

5. Evidence, monitoring and reporting

All evidence, monitoring and reporting will be undertaken through contract management procedures which will be put in place with installers. This will include:

a) Data collection and the mechanisms for monitoring the effective targeting of relevant households; b) Monitoring which households of those targeted have subsequently received a measure; c) The method and frequency with which information is reported to those with governance and decision-making responsibilities; d) The auditing of data collection and the monitoring mechanism; and e) The use of controls to deter, prevent and detect fraud.

Signature  (Director of Property and Housing)