

Energy Company Obligation

Local Authority Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

Local authority: North Somerset Council

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URL: <http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-council/policies/people-communities-housing>

1) Introduction

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation on energy suppliers aimed at helping households cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures. Under the scheme energy suppliers can achieve up to 10% of their Affordable Warmth obligation by installing energy saving measures in households declared eligible by local authorities. This mechanism, also known as “flexible eligibility”, allows local authorities to make declarations determining that certain households meet the eligibility criteria for a measure under the Affordable Warmth element of ECO.

The Council welcomes the opportunity through the flexible eligibility arrangement and has published this statement to support the projects and ambitions below to improve the thermal efficiency of homes and reduce the number of fuel poor households. Taking advantage of the flexible eligibility arrangement extends the availability of funding to those who wouldn't normally qualify for existing Energy Company Obligation Schemes, but are in fuel poverty or struggle with household fuel costs, to obtain support to install the heating and insulation measures needed to make their homes warmer and more energy efficient.

A Stock Condition Survey completed last year revealed that in North Somerset 12% of the 97,393 households in the District, are defined as being Fuel Poor, equating 11,244 households.

The aims of the council's Corporate Plan is to achieve the following outcomes:

- Prosperity and opportunity
- Health and well-being
- Quality places

The Private Sector Housing Service works to improve conditions across all housing tenures and uses a variety of tools, including enforcement of minimum standards, housing assistance (loans and grants) and delivery of an affordable warmth programme to reduce fuel poor households and carbon emissions.

The Council have recently concluded a stock condition survey of housing in North Somerset and a review of housing conditions in the private rented sector and approved a targeted action approach for improving housing conditions. A key part of the approach is a comprehensive publicity plan to inform landlords of their obligations including minimum

standards. Fuel Poverty is highest in the private rented sector of all housing tenures under both definitions i.e. 10% household income or low income high cost. (Stock Condition Survey 2017).

A significant number of fuel poor households (76%) live in dwellings with an EPC rating of E to G and 82% of households occupy houses as opposed to flats; a greater proportion of owner-occupiers live in houses.

There are a significant number of residential park homes in North Somerset with a high proportion occupied by elderly and/or disabled people. A survey of residents revealed that a major concern is the high cost of heating their homes and the limited availability of funding through national schemes for home energy efficiency improvements.

The Council have recently reaffirmed a commitment to action on climate change and approved a Carbon Reduction Business Plan which covers domestic energy efficiency and renewable energy use, leading to reduced energy use and associated emissions.

It should be noted that the final decision on whether any individual household will benefit from energy saving improvements rests with obligated energy suppliers or their contractors. Inclusion in a Declaration of Eligibility issued by the Council to a supplier will not guarantee installation of measures.

The final decision will depend on

- i) identification of measures eligible under the scheme
- ii) the supplier's assessment of the cost-effectiveness of installing measures in relation to achieving its obligation,
- iii) whether the supplier has achieved their targets or require further measures to meet their Energy Company Obligation targets.

In identifying households as eligible under flexible eligibility North Somerset Council is seeking to enable residents to benefit from funding and will seek a written declaration from households (via partners) they are eligible under the criteria. North Somerset Council expects any obligated energy supplier, or contractor working on their behalf, to comply with the Data Protection Act, to fully follow Ofgem requirements for the Energy Company Obligation, and to act in accordance with industry best practice in relation to consumer care and quality standards of any works that may take place.

2) How North Somerset Council intends to identify eligible households

North Somerset Council will identify households that may benefit from flexible eligibility by:

a. Identifying fuel poverty

The Council will use area mapping from data obtained from the stock condition survey, inspections and the indices of deprivation to identify eligible households; in particular:

- Properties with an EPC rating of E, F or G
- Park Home site owners and occupiers
- Private sector tenants

Subject to availability of resources within the Council and the legal use of data the Council will target those most in need having regard to the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) guidance on targeting, including:

- i. Those living in private sector and in receipt of the relevant means-tested benefits and/or on a low income
- ii. Households likely to be living in full poverty obtained from cross-referenced data on income with available data on Energy Performance Certificates, prepayment meters, expenditure on fuel, housing type/age/condition, heating type
- iii. Low income households living in energy inefficient housing will be identified in the private rented sector through enforcement activity under the Housing Act 2004
- iv. Promoting the scheme through partners e.g. Private Sector Housing Forum, Rent with Confidence partners, Park Home Residents Association(s)

Identifying low income and vulnerability to cold

North Somerset Council will target households containing people with the following characteristics, which reflects the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) 2015 guidance on excess winter deaths and illness caused by cold homes.

- i. Older people (75 & older)
- ii. Households with children (pregnant women)
- iii. Respiratory disease (COPD, asthma)
- iv. Cardiovascular disease (e.g. ischaemic heart disease, cerebrovascular disease)
- v. Moderate to severe mental illness (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar disorder)
- vi. Substance misusers
- vii. Dementia
- viii. Neurobiological and related diseases (e.g. fibromyalgia, ME)
- ix. Cancer
- x. Limited mobility
- xi. Haemoglobinopathies (sickle cell disease, thalassaemia)
- xii. Severe learning disabilities
- xiii. Autoimmune and immunodeficiency diseases (e.g. lupus, MS, diabetes, HIV)
- xiv. Anyone else who has health condition aggravated, triggered or health deteriorates by living in a cold home.

Eligibility Criteria

EPC requirement

Properties (Park Homes excepted) which have an E, F or G rating based on the EPC for the property.

Tenure status

Any privately rented properties will be eligible regardless of income or receipt of benefit; a current tenancy agreement or license must be in place.

Private homeowners subject to the household gross income being less than **£30,000** per annum.

Dwelling Type

Park homes located on a licensed residential park home site will be eligible regardless of income or receipt of benefit subject to a cost effectiveness assessment.

Solid wall insulation “in-fill” projects

Where potential works have been identified households will be supported to take advantage of “in-fill” projects where the minimum number of vulnerable households is met as outlined in the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) guidance.

3) Governance

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

Responsible officer – **Kim Herivel, Energy & Health Officer**

Telephone: 01934 426686

E mail: kim.herivel@n-somerset.gov.uk

4) Referrals

All potentially eligible households will need to apply for ECO Flex through the Home Energy Team at the Centre for Sustainable Energy. There is an administration fee of £50 per property for all ECO Flex declarations (to be paid by the installer or energy supplier installing the measure) i.e. no cost to the householder.

If you are an installer or managing agent and you wish to process ECO Flex declarations then you will need to contact the Centre for Sustainable Energy and sign their code of conduct (ecoflex@cse.org.uk). They will then process the applications in line with the BEIS guidance including contacting the household to check their eligibility and then preparing the declarations for sign-off. The information will be passed to their ECO supplier according to the ECO application process.

Householders who believe may be eligible for ECO Flex should contact the Home Energy Team directly (0800 082 2234 or <https://www.cse.org.uk/advice/contact-us>). The Home Energy 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 stored and shared with a third party for the purposes of the scheme. The eligibility information will be recorded on a secure customer record management system (CRM). A referral will then be made to an obligated supplier or installer who’s signed the code of conduct.

5) Evidence, monitoring, reporting and termination

- a. Anonymised data on the characteristics of households reached will be reviewed, in line with current data protection legislation
- b. The data above will include details of households assessed, how many were deemed eligible and ineligible, and how many received heating and insulation improvements
- c. All households for whom Declarations were made will be invited to provide feedback on the process and outcomes following any improvements completed.

d. North Somerset Council reserve the right to amend, suspend or cancel this statement of intent at any time; subject to reasonable notice.

6) **Signature**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sheila Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single blue stroke.

Sheila Smith, Director of People and Communities