



Shropshire Council
Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent
Version 1 Published October 2017

<https://shropshire.gov.uk/housing-options-and-homelessness/flexible-eligibility-statement-of-intent/>

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Shropshire Council supports the new local authority flexible eligibility element of the Energy Company Obligation and believes that flexible eligibility offers greater opportunities for the Council and its partners to support and assist fuel poor households and those at risk from cold homes.
- 1.2 Fuel poverty is a major issue in Shropshire. Over 15% of households live in fuel poverty, equating to around 19,500 homes. Fuel poverty is high across much of the county but particularly in rural areas. The larger towns also have significant numbers of fuel poor households.
- 1.3 Shropshire faces many challenges in relation to the age and type of housing, the availability of mains gas, and the population profile. From an estimated 130,000 domestic dwellings in Shropshire, over 20% were built before 1919. Mains gas is available to only 60% of properties, compared to 87% nationally. Also 21% of properties in Shropshire have an energy SAP rating of below 55 (band E).
- 1.4 In order to meet the challenges presented by fuel poverty and cold homes, Shropshire Council runs an affordable warmth service Keep Shropshire Warm in partnership with Marches Energy Agency (www.mea.org.uk). The service was procured in August 2017 and will be the main vehicle in which the Council aims to deliver measures under 'flexible eligibility'.
- 1.5 The Council's Corporate Plan recognises the benefits of a healthier population and enabling people to live independently in their own homes. In addition, the Health and Well-Being Board embraces the principles outlined in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidelines relating to minimising excess winter deaths, illness and the health risks associated with cold homes.

2. Purpose

2.1 To use the scheme to help address fuel poverty and the risks to health from poorly insulated and/or ineffectively heated homes for low income, vulnerable households.

2.2 The Council will do this by;

- Maximising the uptake of more effective heating and other measures for off-gas properties especially electrically heated, oil, LPG and solid fuelled properties
- Maximising the uptake of cavity wall and loft insulation measures
- Developing schemes to support off-gas park home residents
- Developing other schemes as opportunities arise
- Supporting delivery of measures to 'hard-to-treat homes', particularly those with solid walls
- Further developing and strengthening referral and signposting routes between key health and housing partners.

3. Household eligibility

3.1 ECO flexible eligibility is available to private sector households, including owner occupiers and private tenants, in line with the Government's guidance [ECO: Help to Heat Flexible Eligibility p1](#).

3.2 The Council and associated partners will identify households that may benefit from the installation of measures under "flexible eligibility", i.e. households that are living in fuel poverty or living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home.

3.3 The Council will assess eligibility based upon household income/savings thresholds, house type and likely energy costs (i.e. the cost of heating a home) and health conditions (particularly those conditions exacerbated by living in a cold home – see Annex A).

3.4 Criteria for identifying household income:

The following questions will be used to establish directly with the householder whether their household is classified as low income.

Question 1: How many people over the age of 18 normally live in your property, including yourself?

Question 2: How many people under the age of 18 normally live in your property?

Question 3: After paying the rent or mortgage (if you have one), how much income does your household usually have left each month?

If the household income after housing costs is **below £21,000**, then the household qualifies as being 'low income'.

This is based upon the median after housing costs income outlined in the Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report, 2016.

Question 4: How much savings do you have? (If household savings are £8,000 or more (single person household) or £12,000 or more (multiple person household) applicant will not be eligible for flexible eligibility criteria.

3.5 Criteria for identifying high cost households.

A household will be identified as high cost automatically if it has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC), which identifies its Energy Rating as being in Band E, F or G.

Question	Response	Score
How many bedrooms are there in the home?	1	0
	2	10
	3	17
	4	27
	5 or more	36
	No response	17
Are energy payments made by Direct Debit?	Yes	-7
	No	0
	No response	-7
What type of house is it?	Semi detached	-4
	Detached	6
	Mid terrace	-10
	End terrace	-4
	Converted flat	-9
	Purpose built flat, high rise	-20
	Purpose built flat, low rise	-34
	Bungalow	0
No response	-4	
Was the home built before 1964?	Yes	17
	No	0
	No response	17
What is the main heating fuel?	Gas	-14
	Electricity	0
	Oil	12
	Other	-10
	No response	-14
Does at least one member of household spend most of the day in the home?	Yes	1
	No	0
	No response	0

If an EPC is not available, the following questions will be used to establish directly with the householder whether the household has high energy costs or not.

A household will be assessed to be a high cost household if achieving a score in excess of **5 points**.

3.6 Criteria for identifying vulnerability to cold.

The Council will identify households that are vulnerable to the effects of a cold home where one or more member:

- Has a limiting long term or terminal illness affected by cold (see annex for list of qualifying conditions)
- Has a disability
- Is over 60 years of age
- Has dependent children of 5 years or under
- Who is pregnant

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

3.7 Referral into the Flexible Eligibility pathway.

If a householder is:

- Not on an Affordable Warmth qualifying benefit (if they are they qualify through the Affordable Warmth route)
- Has a low income as established by 3.4 above,
- Residing in a property with an EPC in Bands E, F or G **OR** occupies a high cost household (scoring 5 points plus as established by 3.5 above) **OR**
- Has a health issue exacerbated by a cold home as established by 3.6 above
- Is an owner occupier or a private tenant
- Is in need of an energy efficiency measure available through ECO2(t).

A qualifying householder will then form part of a declaration and will be passed to a delivery partner for assessment of measures to be installed.

4. Acting on behalf of another Local Authority

This is currently not applicable.

5. Governance

- 5.1 Marches Energy Agency as delivery partner for Keep Shropshire Warm will work with the Council and other partners to identify and assess suitable householders for inclusion within flexible eligibility declarations.
- 5.2 Shropshire Council will identify progress through the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Report to the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- 5.3 The declaration of people who meet the Council's agreed flexible eligibility criteria will be signed on behalf of Shropshire Council by Paul Kelly, Private Sector Housing Manager or appropriate authorised officers.

6. Marketing & Referrals

6.1 Shropshire Council and partners including Marches Energy Agency, Age UK, Citizens Advice Bureau, Public Health, the NHS and community groups will identify potential eligible households and through a number of other mechanisms such as HeatSaver referrals, data and map analysis. Referrals will also be accepted from energy companies and installers where there may be an opportunity for a householder to be flexible eligibility qualifying within Shropshire.

6.2 General marketing includes:

- Information on the Council's website and associated social media
- Direct mail outs addressed to eligible / target households
- Through home energy advice visit programmes (e.g. Age UK Home Energy Checks Programme)
- Delivery Partner leafleting to properties near those with installations being carried out
- Leaflets in community venues
- Stalls at libraries or community events
- Linking in with the Fire Service Safe and Well visits
- Articles in local newsletters
- Through the network of Parish Councils
- Tweets from @MarchesEnergy and Council twitter, and through other social media avenues

6.3 In order to target its marketing towards those households that are vulnerable to the effects of cold, on low income, in high energy cost properties, the Council, its partners and or delivery partners will:

- Work closely with Public Health to identify routes to vulnerable households such as flu vaccine marketing

- Engage with GP practices
- Carry out briefings for frontline Council staff and other agencies to encourage referrals, including Housing and Environmental Health staff, Health and Social Care workers, Age UK , Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and other third sector organisations
- Target mail outs to homes where income, property and health data indicate the householders may be eligible

7. Evidence, monitoring and reporting

7.1 Data will be collected on each potential applicant through the governance processes described at paragraph 5 above. Qualifying householders will be asked to give consent to be referred and that they agree to the terms and conditions and declare the information they have given regarding their eligibility to be true. This 'statement' is likely to be made over the phone but options to make it in writing or in person will also be available,

7.2 Procedures will be put in place to ensure that any sharing of personal data will be conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

7.3 Outcomes of declarations made to installers will be available to the Council by our delivery partner Marches Energy Agency

7.4 In order to monitor and audit the process, a proportion of households (c20%) will be asked to share evidence of their eligibility. A high level of non-compliance in relation to these 'audits' will trigger a review of the flexible eligibility process. Those householders selected to provide evidence will be asked to share documentation regarding their income and/or health. Property type and 'high cost factors' will be assessed by installer partners.

Annex B includes a list of accepted documentation to help selected households to provide the required evidence in relation to their application.

8. Signature



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Date... 6/11/2012

Clive Wright

Chief Executive

Shropshire Council

Annex A

List of cold-related illnesses (not an exhaustive list)

- Respiratory conditions - e.g. COPD, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, severe asthma.
- Cardiovascular conditions - e.g. coronary heart disease, stroke or mini strokes (transient ischemic attacks).
- Diabetes (particularly Type 1).
- Musculoskeletal conditions - e.g. arthritis (osteo and rheumatoid, requiring regular treatment and review), chronic fibromyalgia.
- Neurological conditions – e.g. dementia, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, trigeminal neuralgia, Chiari malformation.
- Terminal illnesses such as motor neurone disease
- Mental illness – e.g. depression and receiving treatment, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder.
- Reduced mobility (risk of trips, slips & falls)
- Cancer
- Severe head injuries resulting in disabilities.

How does the cold affect people with some of these conditions?

Respiratory conditions - Asthma is a lung complaint that narrows the airways, making breathing difficult. Bronchitis is an infection of the bronchi usually caused by a viral infection; the common cold can sometimes lead to bronchitis in people whose lung resistance levels are low, such as smokers or asthmatics. Cold and damp weather may instigate attacks, or make breathing more difficult. The drying effect of central heating and efficient insulation may also contribute.

Cardiovascular conditions - cold weather can constrict blood vessels, increase heart rate and blood pressure, making the heart work much harder to keep the body warm and causing changes to the blood that can increase the risk of developing blood clots and lead to heart attack and strokes/mini strokes.

Neurological conditions - increased sensitivity to heat or cold due to the nervous system not functioning as it should. Some conditions such as dementia may result in a reduced ability to respond to cold weather changes such as increasing the heating or putting on more layers.

Musculoskeletal conditions – often related to wear and tear in joints causing pain in fibrous tissues, muscles, tendons, and other connective tissues. Cold, damp weather can increase joint stiffness or cause joints to swell or contract exacerbating pain.

Mental Health / Illness - can often impact how an individual interacts with their environment. This could lead to (for example) under heating, poor control of temperature or lack of recognition of link between cold home and ill health. In addition, some mental illnesses like depression can be just one part of other issues (debt, insecurity, poverty etc.).

Annex B

List of accepted documentation in evidence of householder eligibility

Proof of income and household makeup

- PAYE employees - copy of a recent* payslip, or P60 if received within last 3 months.
- Self-employed – copy of recent* three line accounts or alternative document confirming net income. Must include the month, money earned, allowable expenses and net profit.
- Self-assessment – most recent tax assessment or set of accounts.
- Parental responsibility for children under 16 - copy of a passport; birth certificate; or Child Benefit award letter from the Child Benefit Office, showing your current address; or recent* bank statement showing payment of Child Benefit.
- Parental responsibility for children aged 16-19 in full time education – copy of acceptance on course of study or student financial support notice.

Proof of receipt of benefits, tax credits and/or pensions

- Copies of recent* slips or giro details showing amounts currently payable (in last 3 months); or
- Copies of recent* bank statements showing payments received; or
- Copies of recent letters from the DWP, HMRC or pension provider confirming the amounts currently payable.

Proof of Disability/Illness Payments

- Copy of current sick certificate or MEDEX certificate or letter from your GP to confirm your condition. We cannot cover the cost of obtaining medical evidence.
- Copy of evidence of disability/illness payments such as recent* bank statements.
*Recent means **within last 3 months** with the exception of annual benefit letters for State Pension/ Works Pension/ Disability Living Allowance and Child Benefits.

Notes:

1) *Household income is the total before Tax and National Insurance are deducted (gross income). It includes: War Disablement Pension, Disablement Pension Allowance and Working Tax Credit.*

It excludes Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independent Payment, Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

2) *Eligible benefits include:*

- *Income support*
- *Income-based Employment and Support Allowance (not contribution-based ESA)*
- *Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (not contribution-based JSA)*
- *Guarantee Pension Credit (not Savings Pension Credit alone)*
- *Housing Benefit (including a rent allowance paid under Local Housing Allowance scheme)*
- *Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit if annual income less than £15,050*
- *Any amount of Universal Credit.*