

Mendip ECO Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

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1) Introduction

Fuel poverty can cause low income households to live in cold homes which have a negative impact on their health and wellbeing. This is particular the case for vulnerable households with a cold related illness. Fuel poverty in Mendip has risen from 4,354 in 2012 to 6,034 in 2014 (using the LIHC definition). Currently 12.4% of households in Mendip are fuel poor which is above the national average. The new ECO flexibility mechanism will ensure that those households living in fuel poverty who do not claim means tested benefits are able to access ECO Affordable Warmth.

ECO flexibility will support the delivery of national fuel poverty targets to improve the EPC ratings of households in fuel poverty. The policy will also help deliver the aims of the Somerset Strategic Housing Framework which facilitates a partnership approach to the delivery of sustainable, warm and healthy homes for all Somerset residents. The framework has been developed by the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership which includes all five district authorities, the county council and the health service i.e. Somerset CCG.

Local Authorities have a legal duty to improve the health and wellbeing of residents and to reduce the differences in health outcomes between populations they serve. Housing is a key factor that affects people's health. Evidence shows that poor housing conditions cause accidental injury, make existing health conditions worse, make treating health conditions difficult and have a huge social impact upon the ability of individuals to achieve their potential in education or employment.

The council's HECA report has examined those areas where housing efficiency is poorest, incomes are lowest and health is worst. Whilst the council aims to ensure that advice is available to all residents, these areas have been identified as a priority for advice and financial assistance. The eligibility criteria have been designed to support activity in these areas and ensure the policy dovetails with existing grant and loan programmes.

Referrals made under ECO flexibility will be subject to the same market conditions as wider **ECO energy efficiency work; as such a local authority declaration does not guarantee that**

the measure will be viable. The final decision will depend upon the survey by the obligated suppliers or their agents/contractors.

2) How the LA intends to identify eligible households

ECO Flexible eligibility is available to private sector households, including owner occupiers, private landlords and private tenants, in line with the Government's guidance¹. All potentially eligible households will need to apply through the Home Energy Team at the Centre for Sustainable Energy in order to be assessed (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. The eligibility information will be recorded on a secure customer record management system (CRM). The Council will issue regular Declarations to its Delivery Partners setting out those households that are eligible. The Delivery Partner will pass this information onto their ECO supplier according to the ECO application process.

ECO flex eligibility will be based upon three key criteria; income, vulnerability and property efficiency.

Income

Table 1 – Disposable Income thresholds

Low Income Eligibility	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 or more Children
One Adult	£13,200	£17,400	£21,600	£25,800	£30,000
Two+ Adults	£19,800	£24,000	£28,200	£32,400	£36,600

Eligible households will need to have savings of less than £12,000.

Property efficiency

Where an EPC is present a household will need an EPC rating of E or below to be eligible. This is aligned with the Government's long-term fuel poverty strategy to ensure no fuel poor household is band E or below by 2025.

¹ ECO: Help to Heat Flexible Eligibility

BEIS published an analytical annex² to support its strategic framework for action on fuel poverty. The annex contains marginal abatement cost curves which examine the potential for measure to alleviate fuel poverty. Low-cost insulation measures make up some of the most cost-effective measures. Therefore the following also determine eligibility:

- Any properties lacking cavity wall insulation; OR
- Under 60 mm loft insulation; OR
- Properties off the mains gas network; OR
- Any properties with mains gas have not had central heating at any time

The criteria are the same as 2(a) above. Whilst a cold related illness will increase a householders need for warmth there is no associated uplift in the ECO deemed score generated.

Where a household does not meet the criteria for fuel poverty 2(a) or low income and vulnerability to cold 2(b), they can be declared 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.

Table 2 below summarises the minimum percentage thresholds that in-fill schemes must meet.

Table 2 - 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 (ie 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 (eg flats), immediately adjacent buildings (eg neighbouring	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	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

²

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/211137/fuel_poverty_strategic_framework_analytical_annex.pdf

detached properties) or in the same terrace	or LIVC)	adjacent building or in the same terrace as the ones identified as FP or LIVC
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3) Acting on behalf of another local authority

Not applicable.

4) Governance

At Mendip District Council, The Private Sector Housing Team sits within Housing Services. The Declaration of households who meet the Council's Flexible Eligibility criteria will be signed off by the Env. Health and Private Sector Housing Team Leader.

5) Referrals

Households that are eligible under flexible eligibility may be identified through a number of referral routes and partners. The Home Energy Team provides impartial energy advice to residents of Mendip. Organisations who work with vulnerable low income households will be able to refer households to the service for assessment. The following details the types of organisations and front line staff who actively make referrals in Mendip:

- Housing associations
- Wessex Home Improvement Loans
- Third sector organisations i.e. the voluntary and community sector. Including Community Council for Somerset, Age UK
- Mendip Citizens Advice
- Red Cross Home from Hospital and handy man services
- Mendip Community Credit Union
- GP practices and frontline health staff
- Aster Living
- Fire Service
- Town Councils
- Village agents

6) Evidence, monitoring and reporting

The Home Energy Team will use its secure CRM to collate information on households which are eligible for ECO flexibility. The service will provide the Council with a monthly report detailing eligible householders and the reasons for approval. The following summarises the information to be collated to confirm eligibility:

- The EPC if already present for the householder
- A self-declaration form signed by the householder confirming their income

The self-declaration form will be designed to prevent fraud. The data protection authority form will inform applicants that the Council may carry out further checks with HMRC to confirm their eligibility. Medical prescriptions use a similar system of self-declaration.

The energy supplier that provides ECO funding is still required to collect all evidence associated with the necessity for a measure e.g. that the cavity wall is appropriate, the boiler is broken etc. The declaration of eligibility is not a substitute for this evidence and the Council would expect this information to be collected and made available to Ofgem on request.

7) Signature



Tracy Aarons

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Mendip District Council

