

Dorset Councils Statement of Intent v1.3

Using the powers delegated in the original Statement of Intent by the chief executives of the Housing Authorities of Dorset, the Healthy Homes Dorset Steering Group has reviewed the Dorset Councils Combined Statement of Intent, and approved the following changes:

1. The eligibility criteria have been updated to reflect ECO3 and BEIS Guidance published February 2019
2. An administration charge for issuing Certificates has been introduced. Local Authority sponsored projects - *Healthy Homes Dorset* and *HEAT Melcombe Regis* – are exempt from this charge.
3. Arrangements for the transition to the new local government structure in Dorset are included.

1. Eligibility criteria

ECO3 has significantly expanded eligibility criteria allowing residents to access Help to Heat, so benefits criteria are no longer relevant for ECO Flex.

Income requirements have been revised in line with updated guidance from BEIS and OFGEM

Area-based eligibility has been limited to households eligible under the Heat Melcombe Regis initiative. The latest guidance advising against area-based criteria has been considered and noted, and the area-based criteria will be removed upon closure of the current project running in the area. While there is a small risk of less-vulnerable residents benefitting, this is outweighed by the potential benefit of being able to offer a simple message in the relevant area.

Residential Park Homes are expressly included as a type of home likely to have high running costs.

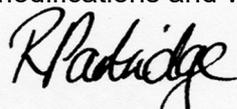
2. Administration charge:

An administration fee of £50 per property for all ECO Flex Certificates, to be paid by the installer or energy supplier installing the measure, has been introduced. The charge for Certificates minimises the risk of Certificates being requested for homes unlikely to have measures installed. Local Authority sponsored projects - *Healthy Homes Dorset* and *HEAT Melcombe Regis* – are exempt from this charge.

3. New Councils:

From 1st April 2019, this Statement of Intent will apply to Dorset Council residents. Certificates for the area previously covered by Christchurch Borough Council will be issued by Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Council. New Statements of Intent will be issued by the new councils in due course.

For clarity and ease of use, appendix 2 contains a version of the SOI incorporating the modifications and with the sections numbered for simple referencing.



Rachel Partridge
Assistant Director for Public Health
Public Health Dorset
Chair
Healthy Homes Dorset Steering Group
29 March 2019

Appendix 2: Statement of Intent v1.3 incorporating modifications authorised March 2019:

Until 29th March 2019:

Dorset County Council

Acting on behalf of Christchurch Borough Council, East Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council, West Dorset District Council, and Weymouth and Portland Borough Council

From 1st April 2019:

By virtue of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008:

Dorset Council

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1 Introduction

Dorset's ambitions for Flexible Eligibility (FE), and how these fit with local policies and priorities:

Fuel poverty in Dorset is comparable to the national average.

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. Healthy Homes are particularly important to Dorset as it has significantly more older people than most areas in England.

ECO flexibility will support Dorset's delivery of the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan, and the Dorset Sustainability and Transformation Plan – "Our Dorset" - and will be delivered as an enhancement of the Healthy Homes Dorset Programme. This programme - funded by Public Health Dorset, managed by Dorset County Council in partnership with local Housing Authorities - aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Dorset residents vulnerable to the negative health effects of living in cold homes. This programme is a key component in the local authorities' work to improve housing stock and enable people to live in their own home for longer. ECO flexibility will enable more Dorset residents that are fuel poor or vulnerable to living in a cold home to access the support they need.

The role of Dorset Councils is to identify residents eligible for ECO Flex.

Dorset County Council will take reasonable steps to ensure eligible residents are correctly identified according to the criteria set out in the Statement of Intent. However, **Dorset County Council, Public Health Dorset, and the Housing Authorities of Dorset have no role in deciding whether fuel suppliers decide to fund work or not and are not responsible for funding any heating or insulation improvements.** The decision on whether a household receives an ECO measure is made by the energy suppliers or their agents/contractors. Inclusion in a Certificate made by the Local Authority will not guarantee installation of measures, as the final decision will depend on i) surveys carried out by suppliers' agents/contractors and installation costs calculated, ii) the energy savings that can be achieved for a property, and iii) whether suppliers have achieved their targets or require further measures to meet their ECO targets.

2 How the Local Authority intends to identify and target eligible households

All potentially eligible households will be encouraged to apply through Healthy Homes Dorset in order to be assessed, based on the criteria described below. Referrals from public, private, and third sector organisations working with vulnerable people and self-referrals are the primary routes for identifying relevant households. Dorset Councils may, at their discretion, publicise the offer to specific relevant groups, such as those in receipt of council tax benefit or users of assisted bin collection schemes.

2.1 Criteria for identifying eligibility

ECO Flex will be available to private sector households, both owner occupiers and private tenants, in line with Government guidance and ECO regulations, in summary:

- Owner Occupied premises where household is Fuel Poor (FP) or Low Income and Vulnerable to the Cold (LIVC);
- A to E Private rented premises, where household is FP or LIVC, but installation measures are not the replacement or repair of a boiler, electric storage heater or central heating system that has broken down;
- F, G or unrated private rented premises, where household is FP or LIVC and installation measure is only solid wall insulation or a renewable heating measure;
- In-fill Specific targeting for F and G Properties under LA Flex EPC
- Band F and G Private Rented Properties are not eligible under LA Flex, except for solid wall insulation or renewable heating measures as landlords are responsible for meeting these standards under the Domestic Minimum Standards

The criteria for identifying Fuel Poor eligible households are (1) Low income **and** (2) high heating costs

The criteria for identifying Low Income and Vulnerable to the Cold eligible households are (1) Low income **and** (2) one or more residents vulnerable to the health problems associated with a cold home

2.1.1 Low Income criterion:

The Healthy Homes Dorset Steering Committee will approve changes based on any updates to BEIS guidance and/or evidence that the suggested rates are not appropriate.

Table 1 – Income thresholds

Household composition	Net income after housing costs (rent/mortgage and council tax)
1 adult	£ 9,300
and 1 child	£ 12,200
and 2 children	£ 15,000
and three children	£ 18,000
and four or more children	£ 21,000
2 adults	£ 15,200
and 1 child	£ 18,200
and 2 children	£ 21,100

and three children	£ 24,100
and four children	£ 26,800

The Councils reserve the right to flexibility when determining eligibility around the thresholds and criteria set out above where there is evidence that residents are struggling financially, particularly residents and their families who serve or have served in the armed forces: Dorset Councils actively support the Armed Forces Covenant, a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the armed forces and their families are treated fairly.

2.1.2 Area-based eligibility

Dorset Councils recognise that the intention of Flexible Eligibility is to enable Councils to reach those in need, and therefore includes an area-based category:

Dorset private-sector homes eligible under the Heat Melcombe Regis initiative¹ are automatically eligible, regardless of whether they meet the criteria listed in other sections. Including all private housing residents in this area as eligible for Certificates (where suitable energy efficiency measures are identified) enables agencies to adopt an area-based approach.

2.2 high heating costs

A home with one or more of the following characteristics is considered to have high heating costs:

- A valid EPC rating of C, D, E, F or G
- No valid EPC and uninsulated cavity walls
- No valid EPC and less than 100mm loft insulation
- No valid EPC and no adequately functioning wet central heating system
- A park home located on a licensed residential park home site licensed for year-round residential use

2.3 Criteria for identifying one or more residents vulnerable to the health problems associated with a cold home:

NICE Quality Standard 117 lists the following groups as being vulnerable to the health problems associated with a cold home:

People living in cold homes who are vulnerable to the associated health problems include:

- people with cardiovascular conditions
- people with respiratory conditions (in particular, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and childhood asthma)
- people with mental health conditions
- people with disabilities
- older people (65 and older)
- young children (under 5)

¹ Homes in Melcombe Regis, Littlemoor, Underhill, Westham East, Westham West, Westham North, and Weymouth East Wards

- pregnant women
- people on a low income
- people who move in and out of homelessness
- people with addictions
- people who have attended hospital due to a fall
- recent immigrants and asylum seekers.

2.4 Any details of scheme requirements for SWI “in-fill” projects:

The Healthy Homes Dorset Steering Committee will keep a watching brief on the situation and approve changes based on evidence of demand and BEIS guidance.

3 Acting on behalf of another local authority:

Dorset County Council is acting on behalf of the following Housing Authorities until 29th March 2019:

- Christchurch Borough Council
- East Dorset District Council
- North Dorset District Council
- Purbeck District Council
- West Dorset District Council
- Weymouth and Portland Borough Council

By virtue of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008, from 1st April 2019 this Statement of Intent applies to Dorset Council.

Certificates for the area previously covered by Christchurch Borough Council will be issued by Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole Council.

New Statements of Intent will be issued by the new councils in due course.

4 Joint statement of intent:

The following Authorities are signatories to this joint Statement of Intent:

- Christchurch Borough Council
- Dorset County Council
- East Dorset District Council
- North Dorset District Council
- Purbeck District Council
- West Dorset District Council
- Weymouth and Portland Borough Council

By virtue of the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transitional Arrangements) (No.2) Regulations 2008, from 1st April 2019 this Statement of Intent applies to Dorset Council.

5 Governance:

The Healthy Homes Steering Group, chaired by Rachel Partridge, Assistant Director of Public Health, Public Health Dorset, will oversee ECO flex Certificates in Dorset. Responsibility for signing local authority Certificates will be delegated to Jon Bird, Programme Manager, Healthy Homes Dorset, Dorset County Council, except in circumstances where there is a potential conflict of interest, in which case they will be referred to the Steering Group for authorisation. The Group will also periodically review the Statement of Intent and amend it as appropriate.

The signature of Certificates will be based on information collected by the organisation contracted to deliver Healthy Homes Dorset: (Currently the Centre for Sustainable Energy, Bristol). Dorset County Council will take reasonable steps to ensure residents are correctly identified according to the criteria set out in the Statement of Intent. However, Dorset County Council, Public Health Dorset, and the Housing Authorities of Dorset have no role in deciding whether fuel suppliers decide to fund work or not, and are not responsible for funding any heating or insulation improvements.

From 1st April 2019, Dorset Council will take over the role currently fulfilled by Dorset County Council in this Statement of Intent.

6 Referrals:

Referrals from public, private, and third sector workers and self-referrals are the primary routes for identifying relevant households. All potentially eligible households will be encouraged to apply through Healthy Homes Dorset to be assessed. Dorset Councils may, at their discretion, publicise the project to specific relevant groups, such as those in receipt of council tax benefit or users of assisted bin collection schemes.

Referrals for ECO Flex are expected to come from the same sources as referrals to Healthy Homes Dorset: From a wide range of public, private, and third sector organisations, including health and social care organisations, citizens advice bureaux, energy advice providers, food banks, and partners of the Safe and Independent Living (SAIL) multi-agency referral scheme. Referrals can be made electronically (healthyhomesdorset.org.uk), or by phone (0300 003 7023).

In the interests of maximising uptake of Eco Flex and encouraging fair competition, while minimising the risks of encouraging rogue traders and cold callers taking advantage of Eco Flex, Dorset Councils will work with the supply chain to allow bona fide organisations to apply for Certificates of eligibility independent of Healthy Homes Dorset.

Organisations with ECO funding can apply for a Certificate on behalf of their clients, on the understanding that Healthy Homes Dorset will speak to the clients to confirm eligibility, check if the client would benefit from other services that may improve health and wellbeing, and check that clients understand that DCC (from 1st April DC) is issuing a Certificate that is not tied to any particular provider, and that clients should compare offers from more than one provider, especially if a client contribution is being requested. There is an administration fee of £50 per address for all ECO Flex Certificates.

Dorset County Council may suspend or remove this element of the pilot at any time or refuse to complete Certificates from organisations that are or appear to be not acting in the best interests of Dorset residents.

7 Evidence, monitoring and reporting:

The Healthy Homes Dorset contractor will check eligibility in their initial conversation with the resident; they will also check that the resident gives permission for their data to be stored and shared with relevant third parties. As part of this assessment residents will also be invited to complete a Safe and Independent Living (multi-agency referral service) form. The eligibility information will be recorded on a secure customer record management system (CRM). The contractor will present recommendations for Certificates to be issued alongside the relevant data. The Council will issue regular Certificates to its contractor setting out those households eligible. The Contractor will pass this information onto their ECO supplier according to the ECO application process.

Healthy Homes Dorset will use its secure CRM to collate information on households which are eligible for ECO flexibility. The contractor will provide Dorset County 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
- Safe and Independent Living (multi-agency referral scheme) form if used for referral
- A self-Certificate form signed by the householder confirming their income

The self-Certification 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 and may take action if a claim appears fraudulent. This self-Certificate and fraud prevention system is analogous to that used for medical prescriptions.

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 Certificate of eligibility is not a substitute for this evidence and Dorset County Council would expect this information to be collected and made available to Ofgem on request.