

## Appendix 1:

Using the powers delegated in the 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 expanded.
2. The access route independent of Healthy Homes Dorset has been simplified.

### 1. Eligibility criteria

In addition to the original income criteria, the following households also meet the income criteria:

All private sector households in receipt of **any** means-tested benefits that do not qualify under the broader Affordable Warmth criteria are eligible for Flexible Eligibility, including:

- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit (Savings Credit)
- Any tax credits where the household is not HHCRO eligible (Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Universal Credit)
- Carer's Allowance
- Council Tax Reduction
- A Disability Benefit (incl. Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment)
- Equivalent benefits administered for and on behalf of the Ministry of Defence

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.

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.

In addition to the original income and home criteria, the following households are also eligible:

#### Area-based eligibility

Dorset Councils recognise that the intention of flexible eligibility is to enable Councils to reach those in need, and therefore is adopting an area-based category:

All Dorset homes in the following groups are automatically eligible, regardless of whether they meet the income and/or housing criteria:

- Private sector homes in LSOAs in the bottom quartile of the main Index of Multiple Deprivation
- Homes in Melcombe Regis ward, Weymouth

The following “home requirements” criterion is no longer valid as it is now covered in the area based eligibility section:

*Vii: The home is in the Lower Super Output Areas of: Melcombe Regis Town Centre; Melcombe Regis Park District; Melcombe Regis Carlton Road; Melcombe Regis Lodmore Hill*

Including all private housing residents in these areas as eligible for Declarations enables more effective delivery of area-based approaches.

## **2. Access routes independent of Healthy Homes Dorset:**

The following text and footnote is no longer valid:

*During the pilot phase of Eco Flex, organisations that have supported delivery of the current phase of Healthy Homes Dorset<sup>1</sup> will be able to do this. If Eco Flex or its successor(s) become longer term initiatives, the Steering Group will work to expand the eligibility criteria.*

It is replaced by this:

Organisations with ECO funding can apply for a Declaration 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 is issuing a declaration 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.

These changes will take effect from the date of publication of this appendix.

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

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## Appendix 2: Statement of Intent incorporating modifications authorised May 2018:

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

Publication date: [08/05/18]

Version number 1.2

**Published:** <http://www.dorsetforyou.gov.uk/housing>

### 1 Introduction

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

Fuel poverty in Dorset has risen from 15,052 in 2012 to 20,074 in 2014 (using the Low Income High Cost definition). Currently 10.5% of households in Dorset are fuel poor which 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 far 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 Declaration made by the Local Authority to a supplier 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 eligible households

ECO Flexible will be available to private sector households, both owner occupiers and private tenants, in line with Government guidance<sup>2</sup>. 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 workers 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 households in fuel poverty

The criteria for identifying households in fuel poverty are (1) Low income and (2) Likely high heating costs with potential for cost efficient improvement.

#### 2.1.1 Income:

Dorset will use the Help to Heat income thresholds with no requirement for an accompanying tax credit.

The rates are broadly comparable with the reference rates as stated in BEIS guidance but using the Help to Heat thresholds removes the need to assess eligibility for complementary schemes twice. 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 consistent with those used under the Help to Heat criteria.

Household composition	Annual household gross income	Monthly household gross income Equivalent
1 adult	£13,200	£1,100
and 1 child	£17,400	£1,450
and 2 children	£21,600	£1,800
and three children	£25,800	£2,150
and four or more children	£30,000	£2,500
2 adults	£19,800	£1,650
and 1 child	£24,000	£2,000
and 2 children	£28,200	£2,350
and three children	£32,400	£2,700
and four children	£36,000	£3,000

<sup>2</sup> ECO: Help to Heat Flexible Eligibility

In addition, all private sector households in receipt of **any** means-tested benefits that do not qualify under the broader Affordable Warmth criteria are eligible for Flexible Eligibility, including:

- Housing Benefit
- Pension Credit (Savings Credit)
- Any tax credits where the household is not HHCRO eligible (Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, Universal Credit)
- Carer's Allowance
- Council Tax Reduction
- A Disability Benefit (incl. Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment)
- Equivalent benefits administered for and on behalf of the Ministry of Defence

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.

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.

#### 2.1.2 Indicators of high heating costs with potential for cost-effective improvement:

While it is the responsibility of the local authority to identify eligibility, not whether improvements can be carried out cost-effectively, it is in the interests of councils, residents, fuel suppliers, and their contractors to identify residents who are not only eligible but also likely to receive help through ECO: There is little benefit in identifying residents who are eligible but unlikely to receive help as there are no cost-effective improvements available. For this reason Dorset residents that meet the income criteria will be eligible for Eco Flex if their homes also meet the following requirements, which are indicators not only that heating bills are likely to be above average, but also that a cost effective improvement is likely to be available<sup>3</sup>:

Home requirements: At least one of the following:

- i. The home has a valid EPC rating of E, F, or G
- ii. Cavity wall insulation is not installed in cavity walls
- iii. Solid walls are not insulated and heating is not by mains gas
- iv. Under 100mm loft insulation is installed
- v. Functioning mains gas central heating is not installed where mains gas is available in the property or within 23 metres of the property
- vi. The main heating system is not functioning adequately

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<sup>3</sup> See 2015 fuel poverty marginal abatement cost curve for reasoning behind these measures at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/211137/fuel\\_poverty\\_strategic\\_framework\\_analytical\\_annex.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/211137/fuel_poverty_strategic_framework_analytical_annex.pdf)

This is aligned with the Government's long-term fuel poverty strategy to ensure no fuel poor household home is band E or below by 2025.

The Healthy Homes Dorset Steering Committee will approve changes based on any updates to BEIS guidance and/or evidence that the suggested criteria should be amended.

### 2.1.3 Area-based eligibility

Dorset Councils recognise that the intention of flexible eligibility is to enable Councils to reach those in need, and therefore is adopting an area-based category:

Dorset homes in LSOAs in the bottom quartile of the main Index of Multiple Deprivation are automatically eligible, regardless of whether they meet the criteria listed in sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2. Including all private housing residents in these LSOAs as eligible for Declarations (where suitable energy efficiency measures are identified) enables agencies to adopt area-based approaches. Accordingly, all homes in the postcodes included in appendix 2 are eligible for Declarations under this Statement of Intent.

### 2.2 Criteria for identifying low income and vulnerability to cold:

While data on residents' health conditions will be requested, this will not be used as a criteria since low income is in itself a key identifier of vulnerability, as stated in the NICE Quality Standard. The criteria are therefore the same as above.

### 2.3 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:

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

## 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

## 5 Governance:

The Healthy Homes Steering Group, chaired by Rachel Partridge, Assistant Director or Public Health, Public Health Dorset, will oversee ECO flex declarations in Dorset. Responsibility for signing local authority declarations 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 declarations 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.

## 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 ([healthyhomedorset.org.uk](http://healthyhomedorset.org.uk)), by phone (0300 003 7023), or by post (Healthy Homes Dorset, Centre for Sustainable Energy, 3 St. Peters Court, Bedminster Parade, Bristol BS3 4AQ).

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 declarations of eligibility independent of Healthy Homes Dorset.

Organisations with ECO funding can apply for a Declaration 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 is issuing a declaration

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.

Dorset County Council may suspend or remove this element of the pilot at any time, or refuse to complete declaration 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 Declarations to be issued alongside the relevant data. The Council will issue regular Declarations 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-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, and may take action if a claim appears fraudulent. This self-declaration 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 declaration 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.