

ENERGY COMPANY OBLIGATION (ECO) HELP TO HEAT FLEXIBLE ELIGIBILITY LOCAL AUTHORITY FLEXIBLE ELIGIBILITY STATEMENT OF INTENT

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Middlesbrough Borough Council (MBC)
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1. INTRODUCTION

The new Energy Company Obligation Regulations have allow Local Authority's to set their own criteria for eligibility for funding for domestic energy efficiency measures.

Middlesbrough Borough Council welcomes this initiative and intends to utilise it for the purposes of reducing fuel poverty in the town.

Addressing fuel poverty is a priority for our local authority and we have a range of programmes that we expect will be complemented by Flexible Eligibility. We also have an extensive advice and referral programme via the Affordable Warmth Partnership that we will use to reach and assist residents in need.

Middlesbrough Council wish to continue to make it clear that the final decision on whether any individual household can benefit from energy saving improvements rests with obligated energy suppliers or their contractors. Inclusion in a Declaration issued by MBC to a supplier will not guarantee installation of measures. The final decision will depend on:

- a) the survey carried out by suppliers' contractors and installation costs calculated
- b) the energy savings that can be achieved for a property
- c) Whether suppliers have achieved their targets or require further measures to meet their Energy Company Obligation targets. Where funding is available from within the local authority to enable works to take place, for example through local carbon offset funds, this will be considered.

2. MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL PROGRESS STATEMENT

Energy Company Flexibility has made a real difference in Middlesbrough. The Statement of Intent allowed the Council to identify residents deemed to be living in fuel poverty, which would not be eligible through the Governments eligibility criteria for the Energy Company Obligation. Co-ordinated by Middlesbrough Environment City, the Affordable Warmth Partnership have been able to expand its relationships with ECO funding and delivery organisations.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR MIDDLESBROUGH'S FLEXIBLE ELIGIBILITY ECO

Households will be considered eligible for flexible eligibility ECO if they meet one of the following criteria:

- a) low income household, living in a cold home;
- b) have been referred by, or have a letter from a health practitioner;
- c) live in a cold home and are in receipt of Council Tax;
- d) live within a Local Authority as a priority area; or,
- e) an exception case.

4. METHODS FOR IDENTIFYING QUALIFYING HOUSEHOLD

Route 1 – Individual circumstances (low income living in a cold or inefficient home).

Organisations requesting a declaration must always seek to use Energy Company Obligation (ECO) prior to submitting a flex request. Households will be considered at risk of fuel poverty if they are determined to be a Low Income household, living in a cold or inefficient home. Low income is defined as a household with an income gross of below £26,000 and not in receipt of ECO qualifying benefits. Cold or inefficient home will be determined if an ECO survey recommends an energy efficiency improvement.

Route 2 – Direct referral or letter from a health practitioner – Organisations requesting a declaration must always seek to use Energy Company Obligation (ECO) prior to submitting a flex request. “Affordable Warmth on Prescription”. A provision for direct referral from Health Practitioners is currently being brought forward by The Affordable Warmth Partnership, whereby targeted GP practices, GPs and other health practitioner’s medical staff will be able to refer patients directly to the Middlesbrough Affordable Warmth referral hub, particularly those whose health makes them vulnerable to living in a cold home. Cold or inefficient home will be determined if an ECO survey recommends an energy efficiency improvement.

This route will accept referrals from households with a combined income of £32,000 or less.

This route will be monitored to ensure referrals are equitable. A medical letter stating one of the following health condition* made worse by cold, will also be accepted as a referral from a health practitioner:

- a) people with cardiovascular conditions
- b) people with respiratory conditions (in particular, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and childhood asthma)
- c) people with mental health conditions, and
- d) people with disabilities (made worse by cold)
- e) people who are terminally ill
- f) people with suppressed immune systems (e.g. from cancer treatment or HIV)

**These are based on NICE guideline NG6 on “Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes” with additional criteria including terminally illness and suppressed immune systems.*

Route 3 – Applicant in receipt of Council Tax – Organisations requesting a declaration must always seek to use Energy Company Obligation (ECO) prior to submitting a flex request. As recipients of Council Tax, household have already been means tested and identified as requiring financial support due to low income. Household will be eligible if in receipt of Council tax benefit and living in a cold or inefficient home. Cold or inefficient home will be determined if an ECO survey recommends an energy efficiency improvement.

Route 4 – Area based – Organisations requesting a declaration must always seek to use Energy Company Obligation (ECO) prior to submitting a flex request. Households not eligible through ECO, or through Route 1, 2 and 3 within this document, and located within the Council’s two intervention areas, are eligible through Route 4. These neighbourhoods are defined by the Local Authority as a priority areas, and where there is likely to be a high incidence of fuel poverty.

- a) North Ormesby
- b) Newport

Route 5 – Exception Cases – Organisations requesting a declaration must always seek to use Energy Company Obligation (ECO) prior to submitting a flex request. Referral Agencies can make exceptional case referrals, if a resident of Middlesbrough, who the referring agent feels are living in fuel poverty and are in need of assistance, but do not meet any of the eligibility routes outlined within in Statement of Intent. Each case will be review on a case by case basis by an exceptions panel made up from a minimum of three different organisations represented at the Affordable Warmth Partnership. Panel must be chaired by the Chair of the partnership or their agreed deputy.

5. WHAT INFORMATION REFERRAL AGENCIES WILL USE TO IDENTIFY ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLDS?

Eligible households will be identified and targeted using the following means:

- a) Where the legal use of data allows, partners will identify those living in private sector and in receipt of the relevant means-tested benefits
- b) Partners will cross-reference data on income with data that is held or accessible on the UNO housing database including Energy Performance Certificates, and on the private rented sector
- c) Low income households living in energy inefficient housing will be identified in the private rented sector through enforcement activity under the Housing Act 2004
- d) Individuals in fuel poverty will be identified though Middlesbrough’s extensive fuel poverty referral network through the Affordable Warmth Partnership (see Section 4)
- e) Particular efforts will be made to reach low income households in older dwellings
- f) Infill properties within area based projects to install solid wall insulation (SWI). To increase the economies of scale of SWI projects in homes which are not fuel poor, OFGEM has agreed that these properties will be eligible for ECO funding where they are co-located with a minimum percentage of households assessed to be fuel poor or living on a low income and vulnerable to the cold.

- i. Same terrace – at least 50% of properties in an SWI project must meet ECO flex eligibility
- ii. Same building – at least 50% of properties in an SWI project must meet ECO flex eligibility
- iii. Adjacent properties – at least 50% of properties in an SWI project must meet ECO flex eligibility

6. IDENTIFYING LOW INCOME AND VULNERABILITY TO COLD

The Affordable Warmth Partnership (AWP) provides an effective means of identifying vulnerable household through a large and well-established referral network. Through this network we intend to continue targeting those households containing people with the characteristics below. These are aligned with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) 2015 guidance on excess winter deaths and illness caused by cold homes, which forms the basis of the Middlesbrough Affordable Warmth Action Plan

7. GOVERNANCE

Evidence of qualifying criteria must be provided with all referrals.

Only referrals accompanied with a Referral Declaration Form will be accepted by Middlesbrough Council (www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/mes).

Any organisation wishing to make a referral to Middlesbrough Council must have a signed Data Sharing Protocol in place, and use Objective Connect to share personal data.

The following officer will be responsible for signing Declarations on behalf of the Local Authority.

Job title: Private Sector Housing Officer
Telephone: 01642 729282
Email: peter.brewer@middlesbrough.gov.uk

A review will be carried out within 5 years of approval, unless Government announce changes with the way in which fuel poverty is identified.

PROCESS

Referrals – Referral network – Affordable Warmth Partnership (AWP) works with a range of partners across Middlesbrough to offer a joined up range of support to vulnerable residents facing fuel poverty. AWP operates a single point of access referral hub. Residents are either referred by third parties such as local health, social care, housing services and voluntary sector organisations or can refer themselves.

Affordable Warmth Partnership – Freephone 0800 304 7084 warmhomes@menvcity.org.uk

Evidence, Monitoring and reporting – Data will be reported on a project basis. Reports that form part of the Middlesbrough Affordable Warmth Action Plan are subject to quarterly monitoring to track progress.