



## Statement of Intent – ECO Flexibility

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Local Authority: Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council

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Website: <https://cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/energy/home-energy.aspx>

### Background information

The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is an obligation placed upon larger energy companies by the Government to help households reduce their energy bills and associated carbon emissions. Recent changes to ECO have enabled obligated energy companies to achieve up to 25% of their Affordable Warmth targets in conjunction with local authorities via ECO Flexible Eligibility.

ECO Flexible Eligibility allows local authorities to work with energy companies to identify eligible households for the installation of measures. There are two main categories of household that Government intends ECO Flexible Eligibility will benefit;

1. Fuel poor households, especially those that are not in receipt of ECO eligible benefits, and the estimated 20% of fuel poor households that are not in receipt of any benefits
2. Low income households that are vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home

### ECO Flex Process within the Borough of Cheshire West and Chester

The process works via a network of ECO agents and installers, offering a range of measures. A prerequisite of the Flexible Eligibility mechanism is that local authorities produce and publish a Statement of Intent. Cheshire West and Chester Council (the Council) intends to take part in ECO Flexible Eligibility and this Statement of Intent (SOI) details how the Council will identify households as eligible, and the criteria which will be adopted; allowing for transparency and public accountability of any schemes. Prospective Agents and Installers are directed to the [ECO-Flex Guidance Note for Agents](#) and if they are interested in delivering this scheme, will need to complete and return a Registration Form.

Agents and Installers working with the Council have not been procured through any formal process and are not endorsed by the Council. The relationship between them and the Council is to enable delivery of energy efficiency targets set for energy companies by Ofgem.

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In addition to publishing a SOI, the Council is required to sign every ECO Flexible Eligibility Residents Assessment Form for households where they are seeking approval for measures to be undertaken. The production of Assessment Form will ensure that the Council has been consulted on the proposed installation of measures in eligible homes. However, the submission of an Assessment Form will not guarantee that a household receives any measures. A final decision will depend upon;

- i) a survey carried out by the agents or installers and installation costs calculated,
- ii) energy savings that can be achieved and
- iii) whether agents or installers have achieved their targets or require further measures to meet their ECO targets.

The final decision on whether a household is successful in receiving an ECO measure(s) is made by the energy company, their agents or installers. The Council is not responsible for making any final decisions on which households receive measures.

## Local priorities and strategic overview

The potential opportunities arising from ECO Flexibility complements the work currently taking place within the Borough to address the issues surrounding fuel poverty and excess winter deaths.

The Council's Home Energy Conservation Act report (HECA report) and the Affordable Warmth Action Plan 2016-20 both make reference to the Council's priority areas, in terms of reducing fuel poverty levels and excess winter death rates. These priority areas will be the focus for the promotion of ECO Flexible Eligibility and include;

- off-gas areas
- Hard-to-Treat homes (i.e. mobile homes)
- areas of high fuel poverty
- private rented households
- areas with high levels of long-term health conditions

## Warm Homes Fund

The Council has recently been successful in applying to National Grid's Warm Homes Fund for the installation of first-time gas central heating systems (FTCH), in urban properties. This funding offers eligible householders a fully funded and installed gas central heating system. **As a result, the Council will not be in a position to sign off any Declarations from installers, for residents who are eligible under the Warm Homes Fund for FTCH.** This is to ensure that vulnerable households are not paying for measures which are covered by the fund. The Warm Homes Fund project runs until December 2021.

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ECO installers are recommended to signpost any residents eligible for the Warm Homes Fund to [emma.edwards@gwestservices.co.uk](mailto:emma.edwards@gwestservices.co.uk)

To be eligible for the Warm Home Fund, residents must meet both the 'Residents' and 'Home' criteria below:

Residents are eligible for the Warm Homes Fund if they:

- receive qualifying benefits for example Warm Home Discount, Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support, Universal Credit and more.
- qualify under the Council's ECO Flex - Statement Of Intent, which includes those who have high energy costs and a low household income OR a low household income and a vulnerability to the effects of living in a cold home.  
(A low household income for a home with children is set at £26,000 or less. Low household income for a home with no children is set at £20,000 or less, with savings of less than £8,000 in both instances)
- Residents who live in the most deprived areas of the Borough including parts of: Winsford, Ellesmere Port, Blacon and Lache.

Homes are eligible for the Warm Homes Fund if they:

- are in an urban area, and near to a gas main
- are not using mains gas as the primary heating fuel
- have no central heating system in place, use solid material to heat the home, have storage heaters or single-point room heaters.
- Current heating is broken, not cost worthy to fix or inefficient.

The fund is available to eligible home owners and privately rented properties. There are no costs for eligible home owners and tenants. Landlords of privately-rented properties with an eligible tenant will need to pay £1,000 towards the costs of the works.

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## Qualifying Criteria – ECO Flexible Eligibility

Eco Flexible Eligibility is available to private households; owner occupier and private tenants. To qualify for energy saving measures through ECO Flexible Eligibility a household must meet either the 'Fuel Poverty' criteria, or the 'Low Income Vulnerable to Cold' criteria.

### a) Fuel Poverty Criteria.

To establish if a household is living in fuel poverty CWAC will need to determine if a household has both a low income and high fuel costs.

- To determine if a household is living on a low income Table 1 will be used. If a household has an income equivalent to or less than that noted in the table they will be deemed to be on a low income.
- Income is defined as all income after tax, including benefits, pensions and investments etc... (Certain benefits such as disability benefits are disregarded as income)

Table 1 – determining if a household is on a low income.

Household composition	Annual household income after tax	Household saving threshold
Household without children	Equivalent to or less than £20,000	£8,000
Household with children	Equivalent to or less than £26,000	

- To determine if a household has high fuel costs, one of two methods will be used;
  - Where data is available for the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of the property, this will be used in the first instance. Properties with an EPC rating of E, F or G will be classed as having high energy costs.
  - Where there is no EPC data available homes will be individually assessed using Table 2 as a guide. If a household scores 25 or above it will be deemed as having high fuel costs.



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Table 2 – Scoring system to determine if a household has high energy costs.

Question	Response	Score
How many bedrooms are there in the home?	1	0
	2	5
	3	10
	4+	15
Are energy bills paid by direct debit	Yes	0
	No	5
What type of house is it?	Detached	10
	Semi-detached	5
	Flat	5
	Mid terrace	0
	End terrace	5
	Park home	10
	Bungalow	10
Was the home built before 1964	Yes	10
	No	0
What is the main heating fuel?	Gas	0
	Electricity	15
	Oil	15
	LPG	15
	Other	15
Does at least one member of the household spend most of the day at home	Yes	5
	No	0



## **b) Low Income Vulnerable to Cold Criteria**

To determine if a household is living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home, the Council must determine both the household income and any health implications which are made worse by living in a cold home.

Low income:

To determine if a household is living on a low income Table 1 will be used.

Vulnerability to cold:

The following health conditions will be used to identify a household as being vulnerable to living in a cold home;

- Cardiovascular conditions
- Respiratory conditions (COPD and childhood asthma)
- Terminally ill
- Suppressed immune systems (cancer treatment, HIV)
- Mental health
- Disabilities / mobility issues

Other eligible households include:

- Children aged 5 and under
- Residents aged 65 and over
- Pregnant women

## **Targeting of schemes**

To enable more accurate targeting of possible eligible households, the following data sets will be used from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Consumer Data Research Centre and the national Census 2011;

- Off-gas areas
- Fuel poverty statistics
- Health data
- Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) ratings
- Indicators of high energy use
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation

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## Data Protection

Cheshire West and Chester Council will comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and will expect any intermediaries, obligated supplier, or contractor working on their behalf, to adhere to the legislation.

## Monitoring and evaluation

To ensure the aims and objectives of Flexible Eligibility are achieved, and for the purpose of reporting, The Council will continually monitor;

- number of households receiving eligibility checks
- number of households referred on for measures
- number and types of measures installed
- reasons for non-installations
- justification for households meeting criteria set out in SOI

## Reporting

An annual report will be submitted to the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to enable them to review the ECO Flexible Eligibility mechanism; to gain a better understanding of the scheme and to amend future guidance where necessary.

**More information:** please contact [ecoflex@qwestservices.co.uk](mailto:ecoflex@qwestservices.co.uk)

## Signature



Charlie Seward  
Deputy Chief Executive - Place

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