

Buckinghamshire Council

Local Authority Flexible Eligibility

Statement of Intent

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Weblinks: <https://www.aylesburyvaledc.gov.uk/affordable-warmth>

<https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/pages/Housing/Advice-for-homeowners/Saving-energy-in-your-home.aspx>

<https://www.chiltern.gov.uk/LAFlex>

<https://www.southbucks.gov.uk/LAFlex>

1) Introduction

Buckinghamshire Council is committed to supporting residents vulnerable to fuel poverty and cold homes. Working with the National Energy Foundation (NEF), the Council has developed the 'Better Housing Better Health' (BHBH) service which acts as a one-stop-shop for all home energy and warmth needs. The service provides advice, support and access to funding aimed at assisting those residents at risk of fuel poverty, or impaired health as a result of living in a cold and/or damp home.

2) Background

ECO funding is a requirement placed a few years ago on energy companies over a certain size to help improve domestic energy performance in the homes of the vulnerable. 'Flexible Eligibility' allows council's to set their own criteria to extend the funding outside of the normal rules of ECO (usually qualifying benefits).

Buckinghamshire Council sees ECO Flexible Eligibility fitting well within the aims of the BHBH Service and is happy to support its use to provide additional funding for energy efficiency measures to eligible residents in the district.

This Statement of Intent sets out the extended criteria and how householders and suppliers can make applications to access the funding.

The funding can be used for the installation of an energy efficiency measure ('measures') such as cavity wall insulation, loft insulation, boiler repairs and first time central heating. This list is not exhaustive and the measures available will change over time. Some measures can be fitted for free to eligible households. Other measures will require a customer contribution. Whenever possible the BHBH service aims to find additional funding for eligible households to reduce any customer contribution needed.

3) How the LA intends to identify eligible households

Buckinghamshire Council believes that certain sectors of society have vulnerabilities which make them particularly susceptible to the cold. These people may be on low incomes, yet not sufficiently low as to be eligible for benefits. Previous ECO allocations have overlooked these residents and we are delighted to be able to provide support for them under Flexible Eligibility.

Eligible households will therefore be those on a low income, as defined below in the first eligibility criteria, and, in addition, meet any of the second defined vulnerability criteria.

i.e. Eligible household = Low Income (first criteria) + Vulnerability (second criteria)

First Eligibility Criteria (Low Income)

Low income will be assessed against the values in the table below. Please note that these values may change from time to time.

Household composition	Gross Annual household income	Monthly household income Equivalent
1 adult	£16,500	£1,375
and 1 child	£21,750	£1,813
and 2 children	£27,000	£2,250
and three children	£32,250	£2,688
and four or more children	£37,500	£3,125
2 adults	£24,750	£2,063
and 1 child	£30,000	£2,500
and 2 children	£35,250	£2,938
and three children	£40,500	£3,375
and four or more children	£45,750	£3,813

Second eligibility criteria (Vulnerability)

In addition to the first eligibility criteria households must mean one or more of the following second eligibility criteria set out at a. to d. below:

a. Health

Health can be a major factor in how much heat is required in a property. Therefore health criteria will be important in assessing flexible eligibility.

A household with a full-time resident who has one of the following long term and chronic health conditions

- Cardiovascular condition (incl. coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, transient ischemic attack)
- Respiratory condition (incl. COPD, asthma)
- Neurological or neurobiological condition (incl. dementia, Parkinson's disease, MS, epilepsy, fibromyalgia, ME)
- Musculoskeletal conditions (incl. arthritis, limited mobility, recently attended hospital due to a fall)
- Blood conditions (incl. Sickle cell disease, thalassemia)
- Cancer
- Moderate to severe mental illness (incl. schizophrenia bipolar disorder and depression where receiving regular treatment)
- Severe learning disabilities
- Autoimmune or immunodeficiency diseases (e.g. lupus, diabetes, HIV)
- Terminally ill
- Other illness exacerbated by cold (confirmed by GP)
- Entitled to free prescriptions where otherwise chargeable
- A substantial and permanent disability and is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance or Personal Independence Payment

b. Age

Age can also be a factor in how much heat is required to achieve affordable warmth, with older and younger residents being particularly adversely affected.

A household with a full time resident who is

- An adult aged 60 or over
- A child under the age of 5

c. Homes with a low energy ratings

Buckinghamshire Council is also aware that some homes have characteristics which mean that they inevitably have high energy consumption. Very

inefficient properties which have not already been upgraded are, therefore, likely to be occupied by people on low incomes who also have high energy costs.

Very inefficient properties are those that have:

- an EPC banding of E, F or G and/or
- be a Park Home

d. Assessed by the BHBH service

As part of the BHBH Service, residents may be identified to have circumstances outside of the above. A final eligibility criteria is therefore:

Any household, where the residents are on a low income and where a full time resident has been confirmed as eligible by the BHBH service (Tel: 0800 107 0044).

Stand-Alone Criteria

a. Solid Wall Insulation

Buckinghamshire Council would be delighted to support the installation of solid wall insulation in the region. We will therefore agree to complete declarations for those households (regardless of income and vulnerability) who fulfil the in-fill criteria as defined by BEIS. These criteria apply when a private household is in i) the same terrace as, ii) in an immediately adjacent building to or, iii) are in the same building as a household that meets the fuel poverty/low income vulnerable to cold criteria set out above.

b. Fuel Poverty

Buckinghamshire Council will complete a declaration for any resident who is confirmed as being in fuel poverty by the BHBH service. This will be calculated using the 'CSE Fuel Poverty Calculator' which is based on the official method of calculating fuel poverty by central government and takes into account more information on an individual's circumstances than listed above. The 'Fuel Poverty Methodology Handbook' can be downloaded from the gov.uk website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/fuel-poverty-methodology-handbook-2013

To be assessed as for this criteria applicants should contact the BHBH Service on 0800 107 0044.

4) Governance and Process

Buckinghamshire Council works with NEF and partner councils to promote energy efficiency advice and the installation of energy efficiency measures to support those in fuel poverty in the region. NEF manage the Flexible Eligibility process on behalf of the Council and the BHBH helpline is used to assess householder eligibility against the low income / vulnerability criteria set out above.

All eligible householders will be asked to complete a self-certification form and may be asked to provide documents in support of their eligibility. NEF will then seek a signed declaration from the Council which enables the relevant supplier to claim the ECO funding required to enable the requested energy efficiency measure to be installed.

The named LA contacts below will sign off declarations and will audit 3% of applications to ensure compliance with these criteria.

Position	Named individual	Responsibilities
Service Director Housing & Regulatory Services	Nigel Dicker	Signatory for SOI
LA Contacts	Paul Harrington Susan Morgan Louise Quinn John Caine Stacie Brown Amy Starsmore	Signing LA declarations. Auditing 3% applications.
NEF Contact	Matt Neal	Management of ECO Flex application process and NEF Approved Supplier Network.

5) Householder Application

Any Buckinghamshire resident who believes that they may be eligible for help under flexible eligibility should contact Better Housing Better Health on 0800 107 0044. BHBH will check eligibility status and will supply the self-certification form to be completed. They will also refer the resident to an assessor or installer to take the process further.

However, being eligible is not a guarantee that measures will be installed. A final decision on whether any individual household can benefit from energy saving improvements under this strand of ECO will be made by the obligated suppliers or their agents/contractors.

Inclusion in a Declaration issued by us is not a guarantee the installation of measures.

6) Supplier Network

Any supplier or installer who seeks a council declaration on behalf of an eligible resident will first need to be registered with the 'NEF Supplier Network'. The Network ensures that councils have information about the standards, practices and accreditations of installers working in their area reducing the risk of fraud, poor quality installations and the exploitation of vulnerable residents that the council is looking to assist via ECO Flexible Eligibility.

For further information about the Network and guidance on how to register, suppliers should contact bhbh@nef.org.uk

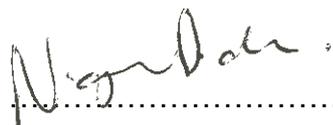
7) Evidence, monitoring and reporting

BHBH will confirm eligibility on our behalf.

- a) Eligible residents will need to self-certify both their income and their secondary eligibility criteria.
- b) NEF will report on a quarterly basis to Buckinghamshire Council on which measures have been installed and their value. Should a customer contribution be required this will also be reported.
- c) Buckinghamshire Council will audit 3% of applications on a quarterly basis to help prevent and detect fraud.

Please note that these reporting and monitoring procedures may be updated from time to time as a process of continual improvement.

8) Signature


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Date: 1 April 2020

Nigel Dicker

Service Director Housing & Regulatory Services

Buckinghamshire Council