# Energy Company Obligation: Help to Heat Local Authority Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent (SOI)

Local authority: Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

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## Introduction

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) welcomes the flexible eligibility scheme (FE) and intends to utilise it for the purposes of reducing fuel poverty in the borough.

Research has shown that households in fuel poverty are:

* More likely to suffer from ill health (particularly associated with the exasperation of underlying health conditions)
* Have an increased risk of winter death
* Have higher levels of household debt

Improving the energy efficiency of these households is perhaps the most effective way that we can tackle fuel poverty. It also has a secondary benefit as the energy efficiency work will also reduce the carbon emissions from these properties.

It was estimated that there were 11.4% of households (5566) in the HBBC area (BEIS 2021) in fuel poverty in 2019 using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency indicator.

The key actions are:

* Increasing the energy efficiency of homes by
1. Installing energy efficiency measures
2. Assisting households to adopt more energy efficient life-styles
* Maximising household income by ensuring that households are aware of any benefits they are eligible for
* Helping households reduce debt by providing financial literacy advice and ensuring householders understand their energy bills
* Ensuring that residents are on the lowest cost energy tariffs appropriate to circumstances

The council will assist where possible every household that would benefit from any or all of the key actions. However the council acknowledges that households in fuel poverty or in danger of entering fuel poverty should take priority and will therefore target its resources accordingly. Flexible eligibility will extend and enhance the council’s ability in achieving these aims.

**It should be noted that the final decision on whether any individual household will benefit from energy saving improvements rests with obligated energy suppliers or their contractors.** Inclusion in a declaration of eligibility issued by the council to a supplier will not guarantee installation of measures. The final decision will depend on:

1. Identification of measures eligible under help to heat
2. The supplier’s assessment of the cost-effectiveness of installing measures in relation to achieving its obligation, and
3. Whether the supplier has achieved their targets or, requires further measures to meet their energy company obligation targets

In identifying households as eligible under flexible eligibility HBBC is seeking to enable residents to benefit from funding and will seek the consent of households to including them in a declaration. HBBC expects that any obligated energy supplier, or contractor working on their behalf, complies with the Data Protection Act, to fully follow ofgem requirements for the energy company obligation help to heat, and to act in accordance with industry best practice in relation to consumer care and quality standards of any works that may take place. These are covered in a separate memorandum of understanding between the council and the obligated party.

1. **How HBBC intends to identify eligible households**

**ECO flexible criteria eligibility**

Where relevant, **HBBC** intend to refer residents eligible under existing ECO Affordable Warmth criteria (qualifying means tested benefits). Where this is not applicable, applications will be processed under the following criteria (identical referral method) which have been designed to assist residents that may otherwise miss out on support available:

Eligible private sector households will need to meet one of the **low income criteria (A)**

**AND**

either one from **high costs (B)** OR one from **vulnerable to cold (C)**

1. **Low Income:**
* Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA)
* Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
* Income Support (IS)
* Pension Credit (PC – all types)
* Child Tax Credit (CTC – no income cap)
* Working Tax Credit (WTC – no income cap)
* Universal Credit (UC – no income cap)
* Housing Benefit
* Council Tax reduction (not where only single occupant reduction applies)
* Have a household income below the corresponding thresholds in Table 1 below

Table 1 – Income thresholds broadly consistent with those used under the minimum Income Standards/Joseph Rowntree Trust indicator 2021

| **Household composition** | **Annual Household income** |
| --- | --- |
| All households | £30,000 |
| One adult and up to three children | £37,928 |
| One adult and four or more children | £42,592 |
| Two adult and up to three children | £50,000 |
| Two adult and four or more children | £54,553 |

(Benefit letters must be provided as evidence or bank/savings statement(s) if household income assessment only)

1. **High cost:**
* The property has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of E, F or G (where deemed as an accurate representation – that is to say, property has not drastically changed since surveyed)

OR

* The property reaches a total score of 20 or above through the below methodology

| **Question** | **Response**  | **Score** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| How many bedrooms are there in the home? | 1 | 10 |
|   | 2 |  20 |
|   | 3 | 30 |
|   | 4 | 40 |
|   | 5 or more | 50 |
| Are energy payments made by Direct Debit? | Yes  | -5 |
|   | No | 0 |
| What type of property is it? | Semi-detached | 0 |
|   | Detached | 4 |
|   | Mid terrace | -2 |
|   | End terrace | 2 |
|   | Flat / maisonette | -10 |
| When was your house built? | Before 1930 | 30 |
|  | 1930 - 1964 | 20 |
|  | 1965 - 1981 | 10 |
|   | 1982 or later | 0 |
| Does the home have central heating? (i.e. radiators and a boiler) | Yes | -5 |
|  | No | 5 |
| How is your main heating system powered? | Mains gas | 0 |
|   | Electric | 18 |
|   | Oil | 8 |
|   | LPG (bulk/bottle gas) | 10 |
|   | Solid Fuel | 12 |
|   | Low carbon e.g. heat pump / biomass boiler | -20 |
| What type of walls does your property primarily have? | Solid brick/stone  | 15 |
|  | Cavity wall (insulated) | 0 |
|  | Cavity wall (not insulated) | 4 |
|  | Other (e.g. system build, concrete block, cob, park home) | 15 |
| Does at least one member of the household spend most of the day in the home? | Yes  | 1 |
|   | No | 0 |

1. **Vulnerable to cold:**

**Eligible if:**

* Receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Attendance Allowance (AA)

(Benefit letter / bank statement required as evidence)

OR

* Where a resident is vulnerable if:
	+ Pregnant (Mat B1 letter)
	+ Children aged under 5 (birth certificate)
	+ Aged over 65 (birth certificate, driving licence, passport, medical letter)
	+ Hospital admission due to a fall (Letter from a medical professional)

OR

* Has a health condition that can be exacerbated by the cold including
	+ Cardiovascular conditions
	+ Respiratory conditions (in particular, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and childhood asthma)
	+ Musculoskeletal conditions (osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis)
	+ Neurological conditions ( ME, fibromyalgia, dementia, multiple sclerosis and epilepsy)
	+ Autoimmune and immunodeficiency diseases (for example, lupus, Multiple Sclerosis, diabetes, HIV, resulting from cancer treatment)
	+ Mental health conditions (moderate / severe for example, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder)
	+ Disabilities (diagnosed condition or impact on mobility or receipt of disability benefit)
	+ Terminal illness
	+ Severe learning disability
	+ Cancer
	+ Hemoglobinopathies (sickle cell disease and thalassaemia)

(Letter from medical professional required to evidence condition(s))

**2) Solid wall insulation (SWI) “in-fill”**

To increase the economies of scale of SWI projects, solid wall homes (i.e. brick or stone without a cavity) which are not ‘fuel poor’ can be classified as eligible for measures under the ECO Flexible funding where they are co-located with a minimum percentage of households assessed to be fuel poor (as per the above low income and high cost (A+B), or low income and vulnerable to cold (A+C) criteria). The in-fill criteria will be:

* Semi-detached houses/bungalows and buildings with 2 premises – at least 50% of properties must meet the fuel poor criteria (A+B or A+C)
* Same terrace – at least 66% of properties in a SWI project must meet fuel poor criteria (A+B or A+C)
* Same building – at least 66% of properties in an SWI project must meet fuel poor criteria (A+B or A+C)
* Adjacent properties - at least 66% of properties in an SWI project must meet fuel poor criteria (A+B or A+C)

**3) Acting on behalf of another local authority:**

This is currently not applicable.

**4) Governance**

The SOI will be signed on behalf of HBBC by Sharon Stacey, Director (Community Services).

Declarations will be signed on behalf of HBBC by the Energy Conservation Officer, Geoff Davenport.

**5) Referrals**

HBBC expect declarations made for this funding will result from referrals via the established pathways and other front line staff to Harborough Energy. This includes health and social care sectors, the voluntary sector and other agencies. Residents may also self-refer for advice via Harborough Energy and be assessed at this stage.

Targeting:

HBBC may propose targeting of households based on available project resources and data sets:

* EPC data
* Benefit data
* Health needs assessment and public health data identifying priority neighbourhoods with higher prevalence of fuel poverty, deprivation and health inequalities
* GP referrals
* Non gas data
* Editorial in the council’s borough bulletin magazine to residents
* Articles in local newsletters
* Contractors leafleting to those properties in surrounding areas to those already being supported
* Community events and staff training

**6) Evidence, monitoring and reporting**

The number of households who contact Harborough Energy and are eligible for ECO flexible eligibility together with the number of ECO flexible eligibility funded measures installed and the number of homes improved will be recorded by Harborough Energy as part of their monthly report to the HBBC’s Energy Conservation Officer.

The council will audit the process by writing to 1 in 20 applicant households asking for evidence of eligibility at the time of approval and checking this as the application goes ahead. If a resident cannot provide the required evidence this will not affect their eligibility, however, a high level of non-compliance will trigger a review of the flexible eligibility process.

HBBC will seek partnerships locally where possible to ensure that local businesses benefit from the opportunities arising.

**7) Signature**

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Sharon Stacey

Director, Community Services, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council