



Orkney Islands Council Statement of Intent

Orkney Islands Council, 1 April 2020

Version 1.4

Introduction

Legislation is now in place that allows local authorities to help households living in fuel poverty or living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home; by matching them with energy suppliers using the new "Flexible Eligibility" mechanism.

Orkney Islands Council, hereafter referred to as 'the Council', is seeking to utilise Flexible Eligibility to address the high rates of fuel poverty that exist in Orkney and to improve the energy efficiency of the islands' housing stock. Flexible Eligibility fits within the local policy context outlined in the Council Plan 2018-2023. A key priority of the Council Plan is to 'Work with partners to develop strategies for improving housing conditions and reducing fuel poverty'

Sitting under the Council Plan is the Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016, and the updated Strategy that is under development. The Local Housing Strategy outlines the need to tackle fuel poverty in Orkney as a major priority. The Fuel Poverty Strategy 2017-2022 is the main strategic tool the Council and its partners are utilising to tackle fuel poverty and it sits below the Local Housing Strategy. Some of the key aims of the strategy include:

- Ensuring Orkney Islands are not adversely impacted by national schemes due to their location and rurality
- Pursuing the provision of enhanced energy efficiency advice and information being made widely available
- Seeking enhanced energy efficiency upgrade programmes for domestic properties
- Planning to maximise the use of renewable energy generation

According to the Scottish House Condition Survey 2016-2018, Orkney has one of the highest levels of extreme fuel poverty in Scotland with 30% of households and 38% of pensioner households in fuel poverty. Orkney also has one of the highest levels of extreme fuel poverty at 22%. Low average incomes, high fuel and electricity costs, as well as old housing stock and a challenging climate all play a part in contributing to these statistics.

The Council plans to introduce Flexible Eligibility through the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland: Area Based Schemes (HEEPS: ABS) contract that is co-ordinated in Orkney by the Council and delivered by the Council's appointed Managing Agent, currently Warmworks Scotland LLP.

Flexible Eligibility will be utilised in the following ways:

- To assist eligible households who are having works undertaken via the HEEPS: ABS programme but require additional funding beyond that available from HEEPS: ABS. An example of this is external wall insulation works, which can cost between £15,000 and £20,000 for an average property. Flexible Eligibility could help partly fund the gap between the maximum HEEPS: ABS grant of between £10,000 - £14,000 and the overall project costs for eligible households.
- To provide additional measures beyond what is available through HEEPS: ABS for eligible households. This may include heating replacement or further insulation measures in addition to works that are being carried out through HEEPS: ABS.

Orkney relies on oil and electricity as the main heating sources as there is no mains gas on the islands. This means households generally pay more to heat their homes than they would if mains gas were available. Flexible Eligibility will be used to assist eligible households with old, inefficient heating systems, including old oil boilers, storage heating systems and solid fuel systems, to have energy efficiency upgrades installed. It is hoped that households who approach the Council and its Managing Agent, interested in energy efficiency upgrades, will also look to have insulation works carried out through HEEPS: ABS where eligible. This will help maximise both the benefit to the household and the available funding.

The Council anticipates that Flexible Eligibility will bring energy efficiency measures to residents that have traditionally not qualified for help in the past because they were not receiving eligible benefits.

Upon being approached by a household, the Council will determine whether a household qualifies under Flexible Eligibility and will make a declaration to that effect. Please note that when the Council makes a declaration to an ECO funder on behalf of a household, this is not a guarantee that a measure will be installed. The final decision will rest with the ECO funder.

How the Council intends to identify eligible households

Eligibility

- Council tax bands A – D

The property is assessed as EPC bands of E – G and the household is confirmed as fuel poor or extreme fuel poor;

- Council tax bands E – H

The property is assessed as EPC bands E - G and the household is confirmed as extreme fuel poor.

Section 9.8 of the ABS Scheme Guidance 2020/21 sets out the permitted proxies that we will adopt to evidence extreme fuel poverty.

Supported measures

- External wall insulation
- Internal wall insulation
- Loft insulation top-up

- Virgin loft to be insulated
- Under-floor insulation
- High Heat Retention storage heaters, following the installation of necessary insulation measures

With the objective of installed energy efficiency measures surpassing (or progressing as close to) a post-install EPC band of D (score of 61+) for the property

Vulnerabilities

- Child Tax Credit (other than the family element)
- Council Tax Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Disablement Pension
- Housing Benefit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income Support
- War Disablement Pension
- Working Tax Credit

Exceptional cases not meeting the criteria listed above will be considered on a case by case basis.

Residents can apply for measures through the Council's HEEPS: ABS programme by contacting Home Energy Scotland on 0808 808 2282.

More information can be found at <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Service-Directory/H/energy-efficiency-grants.htm> and <https://www.warmworks.co.uk/>

Referrals can be made by partner agencies to Warmworks Scotland LLP.

The final decision on whether any individual household can benefit from energy saving improvements under Flexible Eligibility will be made by the ECO funder or their agents/contractors.

The final decision will depend on:

- Survey carried out by ECO funder's agents/contractors and installation costs calculated.
- The energy savings that can be achieved for a property.
- Whether ECO funder(s) have achieved their targets or require further measures to meet their ECO targets.

Governance

Flexible Eligibility will fall under the same governance structure of the Council's HEEPS: ABS programme. The Council's Housing Services will manage the Flexible Eligibility element as the HEEPS: ABS contract with Warmworks Scotland LLP with declarations being signed by the Team Leader (Policy and Planning) on behalf of Orkney Islands Council.

Referrals

Households can be referred into Flexible Eligibility by partner agencies, including but not limited to the Citizens Advice Bureau, Orkney Care and Repair, Home Energy Scotland, NHS Orkney, Orkney Health and Care and THAW Orkney.

All referrals should be passed to Warmworks Scotland LLP, notifying the Council's Housing Services HEEPS: ABS contact officer. Any referrals made directly to the Council will be forwarded to Warmworks Scotland LLP. Referral agencies will be informed about the outcome of the referral.

The Council is working to enhance the referrals process and joint working with partner agencies to maximise the number of vulnerable fuel poor households that can be assisted by HEEPS: ABS and Flexible Eligibility.

On receipt of a referral, Warmworks Scotland LLP will contact the household and begin the process of establishing eligibility and which measures are available that the household would like to have undertaken. When a proposal has been developed for a specific case, Warmworks Scotland LLP will submit the case to the Energy Team within Housing Services who will make the decision on whether the case is eligible to be included in the next declaration.

Warmworks Scotland LLP will liaise with the Council and ECO funder around the eligibility and measures that are proposed to be installed.

Flexible Eligibility will be marketed alongside HEEPS: ABS and marketing will include social media as well as print media and local radio. Information will also be available on the websites of the Council and Warmworks Scotland LLP.

Evidence, Monitoring and Reporting

Data that will be collected from households ties in with the data that is collected for the HEEPS: ABS programme. Data includes information about:

- The household income and any benefits that the household receives.
- The energy efficiency of the property in question.
- The heating and utility costs of the household and whether they would consider switching supplier.
- Health concerns.

Evidence of household eligibility will be held by the Council as well as the number of households eligible for Flexible Eligibility. The number and type of measures installed will be recorded by Warmworks Scotland LLP.

All information will be stored within a secure software system that is available to the Council and administered by Warmworks Scotland LLP.

The Council will monitor installations by sending follow-up questionnaires to all households 12 months after the installation asking what effect the installation has had on their health and level of fuel poverty. A follow up home visit will take place with any household that expresses dissatisfaction through the questionnaire.

COVID-19

The Council's Managing Agent, Warmworks, is a responsible employer and takes the health and safety of its customers, employees and representatives very seriously. The Council has confirmed that Warmworks has introduced a range of additional steps and safety measures into their standard operating process to help tackle the challenges presented by working in customers' homes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. From this point, no appointments in customers' homes will proceed without Warmworks and its representatives checking that customers are safe and happy for the visit to go

ahead. In addition, all scheme personnel will follow strict, newly designed additional health and safety protocols while delivering HEEPS: ABS; including the wearing of additional PPE, cleaning of all areas where work has been carried out, routine screening for all front-line staff, maintaining physical distancing and carrying out pre-visit screening for customers. This is designed to ensure that customers are symptom-free, safe and happy for a visit to be carried out under the scheme.

Signature,

J W Mundell

John W Mundell OBE.
Interim Chief Executive.