



Orkney Islands Council Statement of Intent

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Introduction

Legislation is now in place which 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, here after 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. A key target of the Fuel Poverty Strategy is to maximise the use of external funding to bring as many households as possible who are suffering from fuel poverty out of fuel poverty. Funding allocated towards Flexible Eligibility provides an ideal opportunity to build upon the funding that is already in place for home energy efficiency schemes and to maximise the number of energy efficiency measures that can be installed in the properties of households suffering from fuel poverty.

According to the Scottish House Condition Survey 2015-2017, Orkney has the highest levels of fuel poverty in the United Kingdom with 57% of households and 79% of pensioner households in fuel poverty. 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) programme that is co-ordinated in Orkney by the Council and delivered by the Council's managing agent, currently Firefly Energi (Orkney) Limited.

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 £9,000 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 was 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 new more energy-efficient heating installed. It is hoped that households who approach the Council and its managing agent, interested in a heating upgrade, 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

The Council will focus on households in fuel poverty, as defined by the Centre for Sustainable Energy's (CSE) fuel poverty calculator and properties that are in the worst Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) bands of E, F and G. Flexible Eligibility will only be available to households who are owner occupiers, or those in private rented housing.

Social housing is not eligible for Flexible Eligibility.

- Criteria for identifying households living in fuel poverty.

The CSE fuel poverty calculator will be used to identify households living with a low income and high fuel costs and, therefore deemed to be fuel poor based on definition of 10% of income spent on heating their home. Households deemed to be in fuel poverty who occupy properties with EPC bands of E, F and G will be eligible for Flexible Eligibility.

- Criteria for identifying households living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home.

Households will be eligible for funding if they have at least one of the following vulnerabilities and are assessed as having a low income through the CSE Fuel Poverty Calculator.

Vulnerabilities

- People with a limiting long term or terminal illness.
- People with disabilities.
- Older people (70 and older).
- Households with children (up to the age of 12).
- Pregnant women.

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 Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd on 01856881151.

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

Referrals can be made by partner agencies to Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd.

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 Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd 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 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 Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd copying in the Council's Housing Services HEEPS: ABS contact officer. Any referrals made directly to the Council will be forwarded to Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd. 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, Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd 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, Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd 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.

Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd 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 Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd.

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 be interested in 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 Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd.

All information will be stored within a secure software system which is available to the Council and administered by Firefly Energi (Orkney) Ltd.

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.

Signature,

J W Mundell

John Mundell.

Interim Chief Executive.