

Thurrock Council – Energy Company Obligation

Local Authority Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

Local authority: Thurrock Council

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1) Introduction

Thurrock Council welcomes the introduction of Flexible Eligibility (FE) and intends to utilise it for the purposes of reducing fuel poverty in the borough.

The process of addressing fuel poverty fits into the council's current priorities which are People, Place and Prosperity to improve health and wellbeing of its residents.

The council's Well Homes Project improves the housing conditions and health and wellbeing of residents in private properties. Flexible Energy will complement the councils Well Homes scheme.

We wish to make it clear that the final decision on whether any individual household can benefit from energy saving improvements rests with obligated energy suppliers or their contractors. Inclusion in a Declaration issued by us to a supplier will not guarantee installation of measures. The final decision will depend on:

- i. the survey carried out by the suppliers' contractor and installation costs calculated
- ii. the energy savings that can be achieved for a property
- iii. whether suppliers have achieved their targets or require further measures to meet their Energy Company Obligation targets

Where funding from within the local authority to enable works to take place – for example, through local carbon offset funds, this will be considered.

2) How we intend to identify eligible households

The Council will identify households that may benefit from flexible eligibility in a number of ways.

By identifying fuel poverty

Subject to availability of resources within the Council and the legal use of data private tenure households must fit one, or more of the following criteria:

- living in fuel poverty
- low income and vulnerability to cold (LIVC)

a) Criteria for identifying 'living in Fuel Poverty

For those living in private tenure owner occupiers and private tenants:

- the council will cross reference data which we hold or can access on Energy Performance Certificates/SAP ratings, connection to main gas supply, pre-payment meters, expenditure on fuel, housing type/age/condition, heating type

b) Criteria for identifying low income and vulnerability to cold

The council will target households identified by the Well Homes Index containing people with the following characteristics:

- older people aged 65 years and over
- people with disabilities
- young children
- pregnant women
- people with respiratory conditions
- people with cardiovascular conditions
- people with mental health conditions
- people on low income meaning people in receipt of benefits or in fuel poverty (spending more than 10% of their disposable income on gas/electric bills)

Any referral or enquiry received that does not meet the above requirements will be considered on a case by case basis.

Thurrock Council have collected and analysed area level data as part of their ongoing Well Homes Project.

Well Homes grew out of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) carried out on Thurrock's housing stock by the Building Research Establishment (BRE). The assessment provided information about housing risk, hazards and harm and costs, as well as highlighting how many hazards were present in the stock with the most common being fall hazards and excess cold hazards.

The HIA also calculated the real cost of poor private housing in Thurrock for the most vulnerable residents, using BRE's Housing Health calculator. The calculator measures the quantitative health impact of housing hazards, identified under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system, which is a process used by Private Housing officers in their inspection work. The assessment highlighted that if no work was carried out to reduce the total number of category 1 hazards, the estimated annual cost to the NHS for treating accidents and ill health caused by these hazards would be £953,000.

With reference to the BRE's findings a 'Thurrock Well Homes' index and mapping tool was developed, so that Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) with the most housing-related need were able to be identified. The index uses twelve data sets to show which LSOAs are of highest priority when combined and included data sets for specific issues such as income, health, benefits, fuel poverty, overcrowding amongst other measures.

The index subsequently identified a range of 'hotspot' areas which were used to target the project towards the most vulnerable in terms of target groups and households in areas of deprivation. With the 'Well Homes' index we were able to make specific plans regarding targeting known areas of deprivation, low housing standards and poor health outcomes.

The 'Well Homes' index was reviewed with health data allowing more emphasis placed on mapping those residents who were considered at higher risk of poorer health outcomes, and therefore are more likely to see an improvement to their health following a Well Homes intervention.

The 'refreshed' index was set up to support this sub-group of the population; those aged 65 and over, those with a respiratory, cardiovascular, mental health or long term condition or those on a low income. These key groups are more likely to experience health inequalities relating to their home.

In order to identify areas of the borough where the project is likely to be most beneficial to these residents, a new scoring matrix was developed. This took all 98 Lower Super Output Areas in Thurrock and scored each of them on indicators including:

- % of residents aged 65+
- % of older people living in deprivation – Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI)
- % of residents reporting themselves to be in “bad” or “very bad” health
- % of residents who report their day to day activities are limited “a lot”

The indicators were selected to collectively identify areas where residents are at higher risk of poorer health outcomes, and therefore are more likely to see an improvement to their health following the intervention.

The areas were ranked on all indicators.

3) Governance

The officer below will be responsible for signing Declarations on behalf of the local authority.

Name: Dulal Ahmed

Job title: Housing Enforcement Manager

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4) Referrals

a) Referral network

Thurrock Council will ensure appropriate referral processes are in place while maintaining the protection of personal data. This will include initial identification of eligible households using the BRE Housing Stock Assessment and Well Homes Index. We will also work with Warm Zones cic (WZcic), a not-for-profit community interest company (cic), to determine those that may be vulnerable due to living in a cold home, suffering from a qualifying medical condition.

Thurrock Council have worked in partnership with Warm Zones since 2015. During this time WZcic assisted 304 homes with replacement boilers and insulation measures, and secured circa £795k in additional funds.

Residents are identified via:

- Well Homes
- Local Area Co-ordinators
- third party referrals; local health, social care, housing, Fire services, etc
- self-referral
- lead generation activities in target areas – borough-endorsed mailshots, blanket letter drops

Telephone: 0800 389 7286

Email: wellhomes@thurrock.gov.uk

b) Information flows with suppliers/contractors

Declarations will be passed to suppliers/contractors through secure data transfer. In turn they will be expected to provide information on the outcomes of these.

5) Evidence, monitoring and reporting

a) Anonymised data on the characteristics of households reached through FE will be reviewed and reported to Thurrock Council on a quarterly basis.

b) The data above will include details of households assessed, how many were deemed eligible and ineligible, and how many received heating and insulation improvements.

6) Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carol Hinvest', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Carol Hinvest

Assistant Director of Housing, Investment and Development