

Thurrock Council – Energy Company Obligation

Local Authority Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

Local authority: Thurrock Council

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1) Introduction

This statement sets out Thurrock Council's flexible eligibility criteria for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4) scheme from April 2022 to March 2026.

The ECO4 scheme will focus on supporting low income and vulnerable households. It will improve the least energy efficient homes, helping to meet the government's fuel poverty and net zero commitments. The flexible approach of local authorities (LAs) to identify fuel poor and vulnerable households who may benefit from heating and energy saving measures is called "ECO4 Flex".

Thurrock Council will use all 4 eligible routes outlined in the ECO4 Order to identify households. The routes are detailed below:

ECO4 Flex Routes

Route 1) Household income: households with a combined gross income under £31,000 and a property energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of D to G.

Route 2) Proxy targeting: combination of two proxies outlined below.

Route 3) NHS referrals: households can be referred by either an NHS Trust, an NHS foundation trust, a general medical practitioner provider, a Health Board, or a Local Health Board where a person is suffering from a severe and / or long-term health condition that falls under one of the four umbrella conditions; Cardiovascular, Respiratory, immunosuppressed, or limited mobility and could be severely impacted by living in a cold home.

Route 4) Bespoke targeting: suppliers and local authorities can submit an application to the government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy where they have identified low income and vulnerable households, who are not already eligible under the existing routes. Applications need to demonstrate that, aside from living in Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) band D, E, F and G:

- the proposed methodology would identify low-income households where no more than 49% of which are not in the Help to Heat Group, **and either**
- where at least 75% of the households that meet the criteria are in owner-occupied premises and contain at least one person living in fuel poverty, or
- at least 90% of the households that meet those criteria are in private rented premises that contain at least one person living in fuel poverty

Suppliers who refer households under Bespoke Targeting do not need to combine their application with debt data.

Under Route 2, Proxy Targeting, households must be in EPC E, F or G rated homes and meet 2 of the following criteria.

Route 2 Proxy Criteria:

- homes in England in Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) 1 to 3 areas
- householders receiving a council Tax rebate (rebates based on low income only, excludes single person rebates)
- householders vulnerable to living in a cold home as identified in the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidance (only one from the list can be used, excludes the proxy 'low income')
- a householder supported by a LA run scheme, that has been named and described by the LA in their declaration as supporting low income and vulnerable households for the purposes of NICE Guidelines,
- a householder receiving free school meals for low-income,
- a household who has been referred to the local authority for support by their energy supplier or Citizens Advice because they have been identified by the referrer as struggling to pay their utility bills **(local authorities only)**
- non pre-payment meter households will be eligible if in debt for more than 13 weeks **and** either in a debt repayment plan with their energy supplier or repaying their fuel debt through 3rd party deductions **(suppliers only)**
- pre-payment meter households, have to have been either self-disconnected or received supplier discretionary / friendly credit in the last 13 weeks or in a debt repayment plan with their energy supplier; or repaying their fuel debt through third-party deductions **(suppliers only)**

2) How we intend to identify eligible households

Thurrock Council will undertake adequate due diligence that the householder being referred is eligible and meets one of the criteria set out under the 4 eligible routes.

A dedicated officer will check and verify declarations and associated evidence submitted referring to the list below. Evidence will be retained for 3 years after ECO4 closes if a measure is installed.

Non-exhaustive list of route evidence for local authorities and suppliers under ECO4 Flex

Route 1 (Household Income) evidence:

- past three-monthly payslips
- tax returns
- bank statements proving household's income for the past three months

Route 2 (Proxy Targeting) local authority evidence:

- screenshot from the local authority confirming the household is within a LSOA area, supported by Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, ONS Postcode Directory look-up – onsdigital.github.io
- photo of council tax rebate with name and address – evidence of direct debt rebate payments or letter confirming payment from LA
- signed letter from a doctor / GP identifying that someone has a medical condition, such as heart disease – a disability that, for instance, stops people moving around to keep warm, or makes them more likely to develop chest infections
- signed letter from local coordinator / local authority that proves the household was eligible for a local authority-run scheme, such as Local Authority Delivery (LAD) and Home Upgrade Grant (HUG)
- Eligibility Checking System (ECS) documentation showing eligibility for free school meals for low income, provided by the Department for Education or school
- letter proving utility bill support referral to local authority from energy supplier or Citizen's Advice.

Route 2 (Proxy Targeting) supplier evidence:

- supplier pre-payment meter / non-pre-payment meter data
- customer tariff data to indicate the customer's payment method
- debt reporting
- Instalment Plan reporting, including COVID-19 financial relief – must include customer profiles with names, addresses and phone numbers
- Social Obligations reporting – must include customer profiles with names, addresses and phone numbers

Route 3 (NHS Referrals):

- letter from either an NHS foundation trust, a general medical practitioner provider, or an NHS primary care provider, which will need to state the official signing the letter considers someone in the household to be suffering from a severe and / or long-term health condition such as respiratory or cardiovascular difficulties, limited mobility or immunosuppression, and that the condition could be severely impacted by living in a cold home

Route 4 (Bespoke Targeting):

- evidence will be assessed as part of the BEIS panel assessment.

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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Email: private.housing@thurrock.gov.uk

4) Signature

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ewelina Sorbjan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E'.

Ewelina Sorbjan
Assistant Director – Housing Management
21 July 2022