

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL
STATEMENT OF INTENT

Energy Company Obligation ECO 3 Flex

Local Authority Flexible Eligibility Statement of Intent

Local authority: City of Wolverhampton Council

Date of publication: February 2022

Version: 002

Publication on website: <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/housing/financial-help/eco3flex>

Telephone enquiries can be made to the City of Wolverhampton Customer Services team on 01902 551155.

Introduction

'Better homes for all' is one of the City of Wolverhampton Council's key priorities, as set out in its Council Plan 2019-2024. The city's Housing Strategy 2019-2024 sets out in more detail how 'better homes for all' will be achieved, including the key priority of 'access to a safe and healthy home' which commits to improving the standard of existing homes, particularly for those residents living within the private rented sector and vulnerable owner occupiers. The strategy recognises that cold homes are detrimental to health, and one of our priorities is to help people to improve their home energy efficiency and reduce their energy bills. Not only will this help address fuel poverty and ill health for individuals, but there will also be the wider benefit of reduced carbon emissions.

This Statement of Intent sets out the City of Wolverhampton's eligibility criteria for the Energy Company Obligation (ECO)3 Flex funding which is made available through energy suppliers. ECO3 Flex puts an obligation on energy suppliers to help households in the private rented sector and owner-occupied homes to cut their energy bills and reduce carbon emissions by installing energy saving measures, as earlier national energy efficiency schemes previously targeted social housing. This eligibility criteria has been determined using guidelines set by the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) which oversees the ECO scheme.

All applicants for energy efficiency measures through the ECO3 Flex scheme will have their eligibility assessed by the Council. Applicants that satisfy the criteria will be issued with a declaration of their eligibility, however the Council cannot guarantee that eligible households will receive funding, or that any funding received will cover the full cost of works.

Please note it is the energy supplier or their agents/contractors that make the final decision as to whether eligible households receive an ECO measure as energy suppliers may have already used their ECO3 Flex budgets, or installers' surveys may establish that a household does not need additional energy efficiency measures or that works are not feasible for a particular property. The government has committed to continuing the ECO scheme until 2022, however individual companies may reach their target ECO3 budgets before this.

Eligible Households

As per the BEIS guidance in order to qualify for assistance under the Government's ECO3 Flex programme residents must:

- either own (with or without a mortgage) their home or rent from a private landlord **and**
- be living in fuel poverty **and/or**
- be living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home

Living in fuel poverty

- Households with an annual household income below the average for Wolverhampton £24,784 (NOMIS, ONS 2019)
- In fuel poverty as calculated by the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) assessment tool available at www.cse.org.uk. This may be either using the Low Income High Cost criteria, or the low income and vulnerable to cold criteria.

Households with savings in excess of £16,000 will not be eligible.

Exceptional cases, not meeting the requirements above, will be considered on a case by case basis.

Living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home

Households in the city with a below average income, where they have one occupant or more who is vulnerable to the cold. This means the household must have one or more occupants:

- aged 65 or over;
- aged below 5;
- a pregnant woman;
- diagnosed with a cardiovascular condition;
- diagnosed with a respiratory condition, in particular chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or childhood asthma;
- diagnosed with a mental health condition;
- registered disabled
- experiencing mobility problems and has attended hospital after a fall;
- terminally ill;
- suffering from a suppressed immune system, for example due to cancer treatment or HIV;

In addition, households who are referred by a statutory agency or their partners organisations will be eligible if they include someone who is:

- dependant on alcohol and/or drugs
- recent immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees (if living in private tenure)
- people who move in and out of homelessness

Solid Wall Insulation In-Fill

In some circumstances, households who would not normally be eligible for ECO3 Flex funding may qualify if their home would benefit from solid wall insulation and is adjoined to another property that includes an individual that is eligible. This is to ensure that eligible residents of private sector dwellings are not excluded from solid wall insulation when their neighbours do not meet the criteria.

Households that do not meet the criteria for Fuel Poverty or living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home (LIVC) will be declared as ‘in fill’ where they are:

- a) in an immediately adjacent building to; or
- b) are in the same building as a household that does meet those criteria; or
- c) in the same terrace as; or
- d) back to back entire terraces, but only if the back of the actual properties are touching (not back to back garden/ alleyway separates the terrace).

And meet the minimum percentages set out below:

Property Type	LA declaration requirements	In-fill available
Project consisting of a pair of semi-detached houses or bungalows, or a building containing no more than two domestic premises.	At least one of the two-properties (i.e. 50% must be Fuel Poor or on low incomes and vulnerable to the cold.	The other private property to which it is directly adjoined is eligible for solid wall insulation.
Project consisting of any premises that are contained in the same building (e.g. flats), immediately adjacent buildings (e.g. neighbouring properties) or in the same terrace .	At least two in three properties on the list must be declared by the LA as FP or LIVC (i.e. at least 66% of the properties are FP or LIVC).	The in-fill properties in the project are eligible for solid wall insulation, provided they are either in the same building, an immediately adjacent building or in the same terrace as the ones identified as Fuel Poor or on low incomes and vulnerable to the cold as set out above.

Eligibility for ‘in-fill’ will need to be confirmed by the Council via a declaration.

Landlord Approval and Repeat Applications

Private sector tenants will need to obtain their landlord's approval for energy efficiency improvements to be installed, which should not be unreasonably refused.

The Council will refuse applications where the household has already benefited from ECO3 Flex in one property, and moves to another where they re-apply, unless there are exceptional circumstances to justify this.

Identifying Eligible Households

The Council will use a range of methods to identify eligible households and encourage them to apply for ECO3 Flex funding. These will include:

- publicity on the Council's website and social media channels;
- alerting local Councillors, community groups and staff;
- working with partners in statutory and voluntary organisations.

Installers and suppliers may also refer households who may be eligible.

Verifying Eligibility

The City of Wolverhampton Council' will work with applicants to verify the household's eligibility and applications should be made to the council by email to Housing.Strategy@wolverhampton.gov.uk.

Evidence will be required to verify financial eligibility this may include bank and financial statements and evidence of household income. Evidence verifying eligibility on health grounds will include prescription medication and confirmation from a health professional involved with the relevant person, the liability for paying any costs relating to providing such evidence will remain with the applicant.

The person applying for ECO3 Flex will be required to sign a statement that they meet the eligibility criteria and that information supplied to support their application is true. Households who receive ECO3 Flex funding but who subsequently are found not to have qualified, will have to repay the value of works undertaken.

Once the applicant's eligibility has been confirmed, the City of Wolverhampton Council will issue a declaration of their eligibility.

Authorising Eligibility

Applications will be authorised by a Senior Officer of the City of Wolverhampton Council.

Acting on behalf of another local authority

City of Wolverhampton Council is not acting on behalf of any other local authority.

Joint statement of intent

City of Wolverhampton Council are not working with any other local authority in regard to this Statement of Intent.

Referrals

Referrals will come from a variety of sources including Council departments, the health and social care sectors, the voluntary sector, other agencies and installers.

Once the applicant's eligibility has been authorised, City of Wolverhampton Council will confirm with applicants when Declarations of Intent have been approved and signed copies will be returned to them. If applicants have not already nominated their own installer, they may be referred. Installers must be accredited to PAS 2030:2017 standards and must commit to post-installation quality inspections of at least 10% of the installer's ECO3 Flex customers in Wolverhampton.

Installers will assess whether it is feasible to improve home energy efficiency for eligible households. If it is, the installer will carry out improvements provided that they are able to access energy suppliers' ECO3 Flex funding.

Information Sharing, Data Protection and Record Keeping

Households applying for ECO3 Flex funding must confirm in writing that they consent to their name and address being shared with the nominated installer.

The Council will monitor applications for ECO3 Flex funding, eligibility and take up of energy efficiency improvements. We will retain information about Energy Performance Certificate ratings. This information will inform future initiatives to help residents improve home energy efficiency and the Council will monitor the use and impact of ECO3 Flex as well as other home energy efficiency initiatives.

The Council will respect the principles of fair data processing when handling personal information, in line with the General Data Protection Regulation implemented in 2018.

Quality Standards for Installers

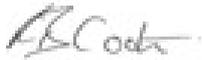
In order to undertake work under the ECO3 Flex programme in Wolverhampton, installers must:

- be Gas Safe/NICEIC qualified if undertaking gas or electrical works;
- conform to ECO3 Flex quality standards set out in government guidance at <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/eco/installers-and-industry/faqs-installers-and-industry>
- carry out 10% post-installation inspections;
- agree to open book accounting and transparency;

This Statement of Intent is in line with current legislation and Government guidance, is subject to change and is signed by Ross Cook Director of City Housing and Environment at City of Wolverhampton Council

Version 2

February 2022



Ross Cook
Director of City Housing and Environment

4 February 2022