

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Meeting date: 18 JANUARY 2024
Title: AFFORDABLE WARMTH GRANT APPLICATION
Submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
Principal author: RACHAEL STOTT

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To request approval of the details of the Affordable Warmth grant scheme in Ribble Valley. The Lancashire County Council grant offer for Ribble Valley is £46,488 for addressing affordable warmth in the borough in 2023/24.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives – To improve the health and wellbeing of people living and working in our area.
- Corporate Priorities - To help make people's lives safer and healthier lives
- Other Considerations -

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Lancashire County Council is making funding available for 2023/24 to district councils to deliver affordable warmth interventions to individuals who are the most vulnerable to harm from cold or damp homes. LCC has allocated £46,488 for Ribble Valley but the funding is subject to Ribble Valley applying for it with proposals on the use of money and Lancashire County Council approving the proposals. This is the same process as in previous years.

2.2 The funding is ring fenced and this year so far, we have been using money from previous allocations.

2.3 Ultimately, the funding aims to reduce levels of death and illness over the winter months and to improve people's wellbeing, through affordable warmth interventions; and reduce hospital admissions and demand for health and social care services.

Eligible Households

2.4 The grant is available to people on low income and living in a thermally inefficient home. This means such people will have higher heating needs and high fuel costs which increase the risks of living in a cold home.

2.5 The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance on '[Excess winter deaths and morbidity and the health risks associated with cold homes](#)', identifies a number of groups to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home. These have been considered in the development of eligibility criteria, together with the current guidance from BEIS^[1] and OFGEM^[2] on identifying fuel poor

^[1] ECO4 Flexible Route for Bespoke Targeting Guidance December 2022

^[2] [ECO4 Guidance: Local Authority Administration | Ofgem](#) September 2022

households and those on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home for ECO Flexible Eligibility.

- 2.6 Households will be eligible for funding if they meet at least one of the following vulnerabilities and have a low income, defined as follows:

Vulnerabilities:

- a. People with a diagnosed cardiovascular conditions;
- b. People with a diagnosed respiratory conditions (in particular, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and childhood asthma);
- c. People with diagnosed mental health conditions;
- d. People with diagnosed disabilities;
- e. Older people (65 and older);
- f. Households with young children (up to the age of 5);
- g. Pregnant women;
- h. People who are terminally ill;
- i. People with suppressed immune systems (e.g. from cancer treatment or HIV);
- j. People who have attended hospital due to a fall;

- 2.7 The following vulnerable groups will be considered on referral from the Local Authority or health / social care professional:

- a. People who move in and out of homelessness
- b. People with addictions
- c. Recent immigrants and refugees.

Low income

- 2.8 Low income can be confirmed in one of the following ways:

- a. Someone being in receipt of means tested benefits
- b. Have a total gross household income not in excess of £31,000^[3]
- c. Household savings should not be used to limit access to the grant if other criteria are met.

- 2.9 RVBC has the further option to support people that do not have a specific vulnerability as listed above but do have a significant low income and energy efficiency issue, this is to be used at the districts' discretion.

- 2.10 Priority will be given to those properties that have an energy efficiency need such as properties that are likely to be EPC rating D or below, although a formal EPC rating and assessment is not required.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The proposal for spend as detailed in the draft Grant Submission to LCC (copy attached in Appendix 1), has three elements.

- 3.1.1 First, to offer servicing, repairs, and replacement boilers for eligible households. This is the same offer as the previous year which had a good uptake and was well received. Other current grant schemes, ECO4, and ChiL do not cover gas boiler repairs and

^[3] This is inline with the income criteria set for ECO4 Flexible Eligibility in the Statement of Intent template: <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/publications/eco4-guidance-local-authority-administration>

servicing. Therefore, this will ensure that all vulnerable households with a low income and low EPC rating can access some grant options.

3.1.2 Second, to purchase oil filled heaters and dehumidifiers in the event of any emergency weather conditions or on a needs basis. These will be loaned to households.

3.1.3 Third, to partner with the Home Improvement Agency to be able to offer home energy assessments to vulnerable households that have been identified as living in a cold home and to provide advice and measures to improve the energy efficiency of the home up to a maximum of £2000 per property.

3.2 Appendix 2 includes Affordable Warmth Grant Guidance from LCC.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – The proposed scheme would be fully funded by the LCC grant. Spending will be monitored through usual budget monitoring arrangements.

The administration of the grant will be carried out by the Housing Team as in previous years. The Housing Team has experience in administering the scheme.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – There are no Technical or Legal issues arising from the scheme. Assisting households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes will have environmental benefits.
- Political – There are no political issues arising from the scheme.
- Reputation – The implementation of the scheme will have positive impact on the reputation of the Council in assisting vulnerable low income households in the borough to live in warm homes.
- Equality & Diversity – The implementation of the scheme will help vulnerable households on a low income to ensure a warm and energy efficient home.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Endorse the details of the Affordable Warmth Scheme for Ribble Valley 2023/24 as set out in paragraph 3.1 and subparagraph 3.1.1 - 3.1.3.

5.2 Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to apply to LCC for the affordable warmth funds to finance grants under the Ribble Valley Affordable Warmth Scheme 2023/24.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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