



Minutes of Committee on Fuel Poverty (CFP) Meeting, 20 February 2020

1. The Chairman and members of the Committee present were David Blakemore (Chair), Liz Bisset, Jenny Saunders, and Anu Singh. Apologies from Paul Massara and Lawrence Slade. Invited guests included a representative from the NHS, Care, Equality and Health Inequalities NHS England, and BEIS officials included: Director of Energy Efficiency and Local; Statisticians and Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Fuel Poverty Strategy teams. The BEIS Sponsor and CFP Secretariat were also present.

Minutes of last meeting and actions

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2020 were approved and [published](#) on the CFP web page.
3. The majority of actions from the last meeting have been completed, and remaining actions are being progressed.

Members' Interests

4. No potential conflicts of interest specific to the meeting's agenda were declared.

NHS England - NHS Long Term Plan and Health Inequalities requirement

5. An Official from NHS England's Experience of Care, Equality and Health Inequalities, presented the NHS Long Term Plan and specific health inequalities requirements. The [NHS Long Term Plan](#) sets out how the NHS will invest the additional funding from government.
6. The Chair explained that CFP's aim is to identify opportunities to better align fuel poverty alleviation with the health policy agenda and then find ways to implement the necessary actions. It was noted that those vulnerable to living in a cold home are an important sub-set of the fuel poor, and it can be difficult to identify these households as potential recipients of energy efficiency support. The health sector offers an opportunity to better identify and therefore help target resources to these households.
7. NHS England pointed out that there was a range of commitments hard wired into the Long Term Plan around health inequalities, and in particular, basing an element of the five-year Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) funding allocation to areas of deprivation. This adjustment was being reviewed and also the publication of the Health Inequalities Menu of Interventions (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ltphimenu/>).
8. NHS England explained that the NHS's '[For a greener NHS](#)' programme aims to build on the work being done by Trusts across the country, sharing ideas on how to reduce the impact on public health and the environment, save money and – eventually – go to net carbon zero. The NHS greener campaign is mobilising 1.3 million staff and working with experts to set a practical, evidence-based route map and date for when



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the NHS will reach net zero. This will involve reforming the NHS's procurement and other services, including investing in high deprivation areas, and opportunities to engage with the health sector at a local level.

9. The Committee agreed to continue to develop links with the NHS, NHS England and the wider health sector moving forward.

Beyond Energy Company Obligation (ECO) – Future targeting on fuel poverty eligibility

10. BEIS ECO policy officials outlined the policy Intent for ECO's Local Authority Flexible Eligibility scheme (LA Flex). The LA Flex is aim is to target households who are on a low income, who may not be entitled to or claiming benefits, and who are most likely to face higher than average energy costs, and/or those on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a cold home. ECO Regulations allow referrals from participating Local Authorities (LAs) if a Statement of Intent (Sol) is published on the LA's website.

11. ECO Flexible Eligibility has been designed to allow each Local Authority to draw upon the knowledge, awareness and understanding of its local area to help target those households most in need that may fall outside of the more general benefits related targeting of ECO Affordable Warmth. BEIS does not have any legal authority to require LAs to either participate or prioritise their resources to deliver LA Flex. LAs are able to choose how they prioritise their spending as they feel most appropriate to meet their statutory functions and local needs.

12. BEIS Officials responded that generally, from the evaluations carried out to date, there has been good feedback on ECO delivery from energy suppliers and the supply chain. Additionally, there were also a number of good examples of LAs who have SOIs, and use a number of methods for effective delivery such as clear eligibility criteria, conducting referrals through holistic home visits, marketing of the scheme, piggy backing on existing energy efficiency schemes, working with GPs and hospitals to identify eligible patients, amongst other best practices. However, it was noted, that many of these good practices take place where LAs have the funding to be proactive or have Energy Officers in place, whilst a few do not.

13. CFP expressed concern that no data had been collected by BEIS on the number of Low Income, High Cost (LIHC) fuel poor households that LAs had identified via ECO Flex. Furthermore, CFP expressed concern that some LAs were not following BEIS Flex guidelines and were opening up ECO3 eligibility to high income households. Given that 25% of the circa £550 million per year ECO3 programme has been devolved to LAs via Flex, the CFP expressed strong concerns about the lack of ECO3 Flex focus on fuel poor households and therefore questioned the value of continuing the Flex programme.

14. BEIS is continuing to monitor delivery, and have introduced measures such as guidance, further engagement with LAs and supplier workshops to encourage LAs to



effectively utilise the ECO Flex programme.

15. The CFP will continue to work with BEIS policy officials in developing the next iteration of ECO.

BEIS high level overview

16. The BEIS Director for Energy Efficiency and Local Directorate gave an overview of current and future thinking on energy efficiency and net zero in relation to fuel poverty, and also responded to questions from the CFP on these areas.

17. The CFP welcomed the Conservative Manifesto commitments of £3.8 billion Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and a £2.5 billion Home Upgrade Grant. Members inquired as to the just transition of fuel poor households in relation to policy on Net Zero, a possible move from incremental to whole house approach for energy efficiency, the forthcoming Budget, and new Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) approach to measuring fuel poverty, outlined in the Fuel Poverty Consultation 2019.

18. The Fuel Poverty Strategy (to be published this year) will offer more detail on the metric and energy efficiency funding.

Update on targeting algorithm

19. BEIS statistics Official presented the targeting algorithm and responded to Members' questions on how the development of this targeting algorithm aims to prove effective in identifying and targeting assistance to fuel poor households. The aim of this development is to use a machine learning model to predict fuel poverty, for the new measuring metric - Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) (which was first mentioned in the Fuel Poverty Strategy for England [Consultation 2019](#)). At the household level, the metric uses the English Housing Survey's data on fuel poverty and a range of administrative data already held across government.

20. Moving forward, the BEIS statistical team will attempt to acquire new data from DWP to improve the accuracy of the model. BEIS also plan to work with the ONS Data Science Campus to estimate Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) scores for all properties, in particular those that do not have the SAP score, which would then make implementation feasible.

CFP's Annual Report and work priorities for the next 6 months

21. Members discussed the timing and structure of the CFP's next Annual Report and how this would fit within the timeline of a set of Government policy publications due later this year and into next year. This includes the forthcoming Budget (11 March 2020), as well as the Government's response to its [Fuel Poverty Strategy consultation](#).

22. Members agreed to decide timing for publication of the CFP's Annual Report after publication of the Budget and the annual Fuel Poverty Statistics.



Stakeholder engagement

23. CFP are working on a response to the Citizens Advice [Zero Sum](#) report - *How to prioritise consumer protections to ensure nobody is left behind on the path to net zero*. The report cites four top concerns from consumers to transitioning to Net Zero: The cost of energy; Having help and support; Making changes to their home; and Knowing where to get help if something goes wrong.

Engagement and Communication

24. Members agreed future communication and engagement will be planned following the Budget, as this will indicate the direction of travel for the CFP. Members will be reviewing the outcome of CFP's commissioned research on *Better use of data and advanced statistics/machine learning in delivering benefits to fuel poor* scheduled for delivery at end March 2020, and will be considering its recommendations and any next steps following the outcome of this research.

AOB

25. Meetings currently scheduled for 2020 are:

- Thursday 16 April 2020
- Thursday 11 June 2020
- Thursday 20 August 2020
- Thursday 15 October 2020
- Monday 16 November 2020
- Thursday 10 December 2020

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