



Department for

**Communities**

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Council Senior Official  
Affordable Warmth Scheme

23 October 2019

Dear Senior Official,

### **AFFORDABLE WARMTH SCHEME**

I am writing to you about a number of issues relating to the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

#### **Payment to Councils**

As you are aware, Business Consultancy Services from the Department of Finance completed a review of the delivery of the Affordable Warmth Scheme as part of the development of a new five year business case. The review proposed that the Department should increase the payment to councils to £222.92 per referral. The Department agreed with this proposal and the Housing Executive will now pay councils £222.92 for each referral made from 1 June 2019 to 31 March 2020.

#### **Increase in Referrals**

At present the agreed referral rate is 18 referrals per council per month, attracting a quarterly payment of up to £12,037 based on 18 referrals per month being received. Following a recent review of the available budget and with the possibility of an increased budget in 2020/2021 the Department is increasing the number of referrals as set out in the table below. The reduced number in December reflects Councils' request for flexibility but allows for urgent referrals if they arise.

<b>Month</b>	<b>Number of Referrals</b>
November 2019	22
December 2019	10
January 2020	39
February 2020	39
March 2020	39

This will result in an increased quarterly payment dependant on all monthly referrals being received. This will not require an amendment to the Service Level Agreement which was issued to you on 22 August 2019 for sign off.

### **Referral Cancellations**

Councils have been concerned with the number of cancellations received and have often requested the opportunity to revisit those referrals ahead of closing the application. As you are aware, the Housing Executive have previously advised that they make three attempts to contact the householder ahead of taking the decision to cancel. However, following further requests from Councils the Housing Executive is currently engaging with all Councils to agree a resolution which will attempt to secure householders cooperation or gather any outstanding verification documents etc. ahead of closure. Given the targeted nature of the Scheme this will be limited to those households on the targeted lists.

### **Targeted and Self Referrals**

The Department is currently exploring the issue of maintaining the current referral ratio of 80% targeted to 20% non-targeted, as per the new 5 year business case. While this is ongoing the Housing Executive will continue to monitor referrals received to ensure the 80:20 ratio is being maintained. I will write to you as soon as we have come to a decision about the targeted and non-targeted ratio.

### **Requirements**

In order to facilitate the successful progression of applications going forward the following process requirements as set out in the new business case and discussed at the September meeting should be adhered to:

- UPRNs should be provided to Housing Executive on all targeted referrals;
- complete documentation should be provided with all referrals;
- income eligibility should be confirmed;
- referral numbers should be consistent with the table above; and
- continuing to prioritise households requiring multiple measures, where possible, to ensure SAP improvement targets are met.

In conclusion I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued co-operation in ensuring successful delivery of this very popular scheme.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Avril Hiles".

**Avril Hiles**

cc: David Polley  
Oliver McHugh  
Danny O'Reilly  
Roisin O'Neill