

From: David Polley

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Our ref:

Date: 15 May 2020

Senior Council Official
Affordable Warmth Scheme

AFFORDABLE WARMTH SCHEME: COUNCIL FUNDING AND STAFF RETENTION

Councils have raised the issue of Affordable Warmth payments and retention of Council Affordable Warmth Scheme staff during the COVID-19 crisis. Given the temporary restrictions introduced to protect the health and safety of householders, Council and Housing Executive staff due the crisis, (the cessation of all home visits) and the resulting introduction of emergency referrals only, it will not be possible to fulfil the previously agreed referral profiles of 38 per month per Council.

I am therefore writing to confirm that Councils can be paid the same amount as in 2019/20 Quarter 1 (approximately £10.9k per Council), to ensure that they can continue to refer emergency cases to the Housing Executive. This is conditional on confirmation from yourselves that, you will immediately return to fulfilling the agreed referral profiles as soon activities can return to normal, or if alternative processes are developed.

A further condition of payment is that Councils, as well as making emergency referrals, should also work on non-emergency referrals as far as possible without visits into people homes so that when the lockdown is lifted they will be able to verify the eligibility criteria and make a referral to the Housing Executive.

This funding is subject to future review and may be adjusted depending on the extent to which Council Affordable Warmth Scheme staff are eligible and accepted under the Government's furlough scheme.

I hope this provides some reassurance and allows you to retain Affordable Warmth Scheme staff. I would be grateful if you would indicate by 5pm on Tuesday 19 May 2020 to avril.hiles@communities-ni.gov.uk and copy oliver.mchugh@communities-ni.gov.uk if you are content to agree to this interim payment arrangement.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Polley', written in a cursive style.

David Polley
Director, Housing Supply Policy