

**From: David Polley**

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Our ref:

Date: 14 August 2020

Chief Executives and  
Senior Officials (Affordable Warmth Scheme)

Dear Chief Executive

## **AFFORDABLE WARMTH SCHEME**

You may be aware that I have been engaging extensively with the Council Officers responsible for assisting with the delivery of the Department's Affordable Warmth Scheme. I am conscious of the difficult situation we have all had to cope with during the current health crisis however it is more important than ever that collectively we continue to assist the most vulnerable and in particular those in fuel poverty.

You will recall that in May I set out proposals for temporary arrangements for emergency referrals during the COVID-19 pandemic i.e there would be a flat rate payment for the period April to June of £10.9k per Council. These arrangements were agreed on the condition that Councils would be in a position to meet an agreed monthly target rate of referrals once restrictions were lifted.

In June I wrote again to ask when Councils would expect to be in a position, following your own risk assessments etc. to re-open the Scheme and to send referrals to the Housing Executive as soon as possible (previously set at 39 per month). Furthermore in July the Department emailed all Council Senior officers in an effort to confirm how many referrals could be made. Most Councils responded to say this would depend on the method of payment going forward and would not make any commitment until after a scheduled meeting with the Department on 5 August.

My team confirmed at this meeting that there is now a confirmed budget of at least £12m to spend on the Affordable Warmth Scheme before the end of the financial year. Council officers were also informed that to maximise the budget available that each Council would be required to make 44 referrals to the Housing Executive each month from August. It was our view that this target is achievable should Councils fulfil their agreement to work on emergency referrals during the period when restrictions to the scheme were in place and to process normal referrals as far as possible. As agreed Councils will be paid per referral (£222.92). As far as possible the majority (at least 60%) of these referrals should be from the targeted list however the Department is currently reviewing this requirement.

It is essential that if we are to maximise the available budget Councils need to start delivering immediately in line with the above arrangements and my team have worked closely with Councils and NIHE to make this happen. Whilst some councils have responded more positively than others the level of co-operation has been disappointing. The Department would prefer Councils to continue delivering the scheme in line with the agreed terms and conditions however should this not be possible then the Department reserves the right to review and potentially seek alternatives to the current delivery model

I should therefore be grateful if you would confirm by Friday 21 August 2020 if your Council is in a position to continue to deliver the Affordable Warmth Scheme in your Council area in line with the conditions set out.

If we do not receive a response by 21 August we may assume that you no longer wish to remain in your role as a delivery partner of the Affordable Warmth Scheme. It would also be our intention to have the SLA formally agreed before the end of August and performance against targets will be monitored monthly. I should be grateful if you would copy your response to Avril Hiles, Head of the Fuel Poverty Team.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'David Polley', written in dark ink.

**David Polley**

