

Transition Policy for Managing Referrals During the Introduction of Home Energy Advice (HEA)

This document sets out the policy for managing the transition from the existing Warm Homes Local Grant (WHLG) referral process to the Home Energy Advice (HEA) service.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a consistent national approach whilst recognising that Local Authorities (LAs) are at different stages of programme delivery and therefore require flexibility to manage their own referral pipelines.

The policy seeks to balance four overarching objectives:

- maintaining fairness for consumers who have already applied;
- enabling Local Authorities to manage the transition in a way that reflects local operational circumstances;
- maximising programme outcomes through increased use of higher-quality HEA referrals; and
- ensuring a managed and orderly transition to a single referral route.

Policy Principles

All Local Authorities should manage the transition in accordance with the following principles:

1. **Consumer Fairness** - Consumers who have already entered the programme should not be disadvantaged by the introduction of HEA. Where consumers are asked to submit a new referral through HEA, this should be because it supports better eligibility assessment and programme delivery rather than because their previous application has been disregarded.
2. **Local Operational Flexibility** - Local Authorities are best placed to understand the maturity of their referral pipeline, available delivery capacity and contractual arrangements. The Department will therefore establish national expectations while allowing Local Authorities discretion over the operational implementation of the transition.
3. **Consistency** - Although Local Authorities will determine their own transition point, all Authorities should operate within a common national policy so that consumers receive broadly consistent treatment irrespective of location.
4. **Programme Integrity** - The transition should improve the overall quality of referrals entering the programme whilst maintaining confidence in the fairness of the scheme. Duplicate referrals should not distort programme reporting or performance metrics.

National Policy Requirements

1. Local Transition Point ("Line in the Sand")

Each Local Authority should identify a clearly defined point within its referral pipeline that separates:

- referrals that will continue to be progressed through the existing referral route; and
- referrals that should instead be invited to submit a new application through HEA.

The transition point should reflect local operational circumstances rather than a nationally prescribed date. In determining this point, Local Authorities should consider:

- current referral volumes;
- existing delivery commitments;
- available contractor capacity;
- maturity of referrals;
- expected delivery rates;
- resource available to administer referrals.

The rationale should be documented and retained for audit purposes.

2. Treatment of Legacy Referrals

Referrals received before the Local Authority's transition point should normally continue to be progressed through existing arrangements. All legacy referrals must receive contact from their GR within 10 working days and also to confirm what is happening with their referral as part of existing obligations under the WH:LG Memorandum of Understanding

Local Authorities should retain discretion to review referrals where:

- information is no longer current;
- households can no longer be contacted;
- circumstances have materially changed;
- eligibility cannot be confirmed.

This should not become a full revalidation exercise unless considered necessary locally.

3. Referrals Beyond the Transition Point

Consumers whose referrals fall beyond the agreed transition point should be contacted and invited to submit a new application through HEA. Communications should explain:

- why the new application is being requested;
- the benefits of HEA;
- that HEA provides a quicker and more reliable assessment process;
- that the request does not imply previous ineligibility.

Where possible, communications should reassure consumers that they will not lose their place in the Local Authority's delivery pipeline simply because they have been asked to use the improved referral route.

4. Maintaining Consumer Priority

Where a consumer submits a replacement HEA referral following an invitation from the Local Authority, reasonable efforts should be made to preserve that consumer's relative priority within the Local Authority's existing delivery programme.

Consumers should not be disadvantaged simply because they have complied with a request to move onto the new referral route.

Local Authorities should therefore establish processes for matching replacement HEA referrals to existing legacy referrals.

5. Duplicate Referral Management

The introduction of HEA is likely to result in some households appearing in both systems. Local Authorities should identify duplicate referrals wherever reasonably practicable.

Where duplicates are identified:

- only one referral should remain active;
- duplicate records should be closed appropriately;
- programme reporting should count unique households rather than referral records;
- performance reporting should avoid double-counting.

6. Closure of the Legacy Referral Route

All legacy referrals should be progressed to an appropriate outcome as part of the transition to HEA. This may include progressing the referral through to delivery, closing the referral where it is no longer appropriate to proceed, or inviting the consumer to submit a new application through HEA in accordance with this policy.

Once the transition to HEA is complete, HEA will become the sole GOV.UK referral route into the Warm Homes Local Grant programme, and Local Authorities should no longer actively manage referrals through the legacy route.

DESNZ will monitor progress throughout the transition period and work with Local Authorities to identify and resolve barriers to completing the transition. Where exceptional circumstances are likely to prevent a Local Authority from completing the transition within the agreed implementation timetable, these should be escalated to DESNZ at the earliest opportunity, together with a proposed recovery plan and revised timetable. The implementation timetable will be confirmed separately.

7. Pausing Referrals on the Future Service Using the Change Control Process

Where Grant Recipients are experiencing a high volume of referrals and are unable to meet demand, a request should be made to their Project Support Officer to submit a Project Change Request to pause the service in line with the pausing referrals process.

