

14th March 2023

KEY DECISION?

YES/NO

ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT SCHEME ALTERNATIVE FUNDING POLICY

SUMMARY:

This report seeks approval to adopt a policy to deliver the Energy Bill Support Scheme EBSS Alternative Funding. Details on how the scheme will work and who will be eligible is outlined in this report and the policy in appendix 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet are recommended to:

- 1) Agree the local EBSS Alternative Funding Policy to enable the council to provide financial support to households in the borough who were not eligible for previous funding from electricity suppliers.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a local policy to enable the council to make energy payments to households in the borough who were not eligible for funding via their electricity suppliers. The policy is to be called the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS Alternative Funding).
- 1.2. This is a key decision as the council has been allocated £374,400 in funding from the government to deliver the EBSS Alternative Funding Scheme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Government's Energy Bill Support Scheme (EBSS) provides a discount on energy bills of £400 for most households in Great Britain. Households receive the £400 in six instalments as a credit to their utility bill between October 2022 and March 2023.
- 2.2. There are, however, a smaller number of households who pay for their energy in a different way, such as through a commercial landlord or intermediary, such as park home residents and some housing association

tenants. The EBSS Alternative Funding has been created to provide a direct payment to these households.

- 2.3 The EBSS Alternative Funding is a one-off non-repayable payment of £400 to eligible households who have not received the main EBSS payment automatically.
- 2.4 The government have provided the council with guidance on how the scheme should work and the council have followed that guidance when creating the policy. Details of the guidance is in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.5 The councils EBSS Alternative Funding Policy is in Appendix 2 of this report.

3. DETAILS OF THE SCHEME

- 3.1. The scheme is being delivered jointly by Government and the Council and individuals will need to apply for the EBSS Alternative Funding using a GOV.UK portal. The council is responsible for distributing support payments to eligible applicants within the borough.
- 3.2 The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) expects eligible households to include those with a commercial landlord or an intermediary, such as park home residents and some housing association tenants. The EBSS alternative funding is also expected to reach a significant number of vulnerable people, including self-funding residents in care homes.
- 3.3 Any household wishing to apply for an EBSS Alternative Funding payment will need to make an application via GOV.UK.
- 3.4 DESNZ will then perform verification and eligibility checks, before passing onto the council to perform some final checks around residency and then distribute payments.

General Principles

- 3.5 The primary principle of the EBSS Alternative Funding Scheme is to provide the equivalent support to those domestic households who have not been eligible to receive the EBSS Support automatically because they do not have a domestic electricity supply contract.
- 3.6 In all cases, the property for which support is being claimed must be the sole or main residence of the applying household and, to be eligible for the scheme, households must be able to provide sufficient proof of that to the council.

Eligibility Criteria

- 3.7 To be eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding applicants must meet the following criteria on the date of their application:
 - The property for which support is being claimed is the sole or main residence of that applicant.

- The resident is responsible for paying for energy used in the property as part of a service charge, rent or other arrangement.
 - The household is not already receiving EBSS payments through the main scheme.
 - The household property is not a business premises.
 - The property is wholly or mainly used for domestic purposes, except for businesses whose main business activity is to provide long term residential accommodation (landlords, care homes etc).
- 3.8 The council will use its local knowledge and the criteria set out in the policy to assist in deciding on eligibility of a household for this scheme.

Households Eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding

- 3.9 The following households could be eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding are as follows:
- Park home residents.
 - Housing association, social and private tenants, leaseholders, supplied via a landlord with a commercial meter.
 - Partly and wholly self-funded care home residents.
 - Households in house boats on residential moorings.
 - Households on a private electricity network, for example those supplied by a heat network.
 - Off-grid households.
 - Traveller households on authorised sites.
 - Households who live in a dwelling on business premises that is used wholly or mainly for domestic purposes.
 - Households in temporary or supported accommodation.

4 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 4.1 The council will receive an allocation from Central Government to cover the full cost of supporting eligible households.
- 4.2 The council will receive New Burdens funding to deliver the scheme.
- 4.3 Therefore, there will be no financial impact on the council but will be of significant benefit to a number of households in the borough.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 In conclusion, cabinet is asked to approve the EBSS Alternative Funding Policy.
- 5.2 The council will be provided with funds by Government to cover the EBSS Alternative Funding Scheme.

5.3 The Corporate Services Policy Holder has reviewed the policy and is supportive of the policy.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding – Guidance for local authorities in Great Britain (Appendix 1 of this report).

Rushmoor Borough Council’s Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding Policy

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

List

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Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding

Guidance for local authorities in Great Britain

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding is aimed at providing support to households not eligible for the automatic [Energy Bills Support Scheme GB](#) (£400 payment paid by energy suppliers). This guidance is to help local authorities, who are providing support to the UK Government in verifying applications and making payments, understand what they need to do with the application data they receive.

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Contents

1. Introduction	5
2. Legal and Regulatory Framework	8
2.1 Legal Basis.....	8
2.2 Subsidy Control Considerations.....	8
2.3 Data Sharing and Data Privacy.....	8
2.4 Searchlight Data.....	9
3. Communicating the Scheme	10
4. Providing the Grant to Local Authorities	11
4.1 Principles.....	11
4.2 The Grant Payment.....	11
4.3 Payment Reconciliation	11
5. Providing the Support Payment to Eligible Households	13
5.1 General Principles.....	13
5.2 Eligibility Criteria.....	13
5.3 Households Eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding.....	14
5.4 Eligible Households on Business Premises	15
5.5 Households in Non-permanent Accommodation.....	15
5.6 Exclusions to EBSS Alternative Funding.....	15
6. Application Process	17
7. Role of BEIS	18
7.2 Application Portal, Assisted Digital Contact Centre and Application Management Portal.....	18
7.3 BEIS Initial Verification Checks	19
7.4 Forwarding Applications to the local authority.....	19
7.5 Communicating the Application Status	20
8. Role of Local Authorities	21
8.1 Local authorities in Great Britain are responsible for eligibility checks and payment processing.	21
8.2 Data Access and Management	21
8.3 Local authority checks	21
8.4 Local Authority Correspondence with Applicants	25
8.5 Appeals, Objections and Complaints.....	26
8.6 Local Authority Pre- and Post- Payment Assurance	26

OFFICIAL

8.7 Providing the Payment to Eligible Applicants.....27

9. Fraud and Error29

10. Assurance.....30

 10.6 BEIS Post Payment Assurance.....30

 10.7 Debt Recovery.....31

11. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements32

Annex A: Minimum Assurance Criteria to be Evidenced by Local Authorities33

Annex B: Public Sector Equality Duty39

Annex C: Legal Gateway that allows LAs to access DWP’s Searchlight data for the purposes of the EBSS Alternative Funding administration, but only for applications where there is a qualifying DWP benefit claim.40

Annex D: Contact details41

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Guidance is provided by the Department for Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) to support local authorities to deliver the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS Alternative Funding) to eligible households (by household we mean the collective occupants of a premises which is their sole and main residential address).
- 1.2 Households should visit the scheme application page for more information on the EBSS Alternative Funding. Information on wider energy support schemes can be found at <https://helpforhouseholds.campaign.gov.uk>.
- 1.3 Beware of scams. Most households will automatically be provided with Energy Bills Support Scheme payments and will not need to apply for the scheme. Households will never be asked to apply for EBSS Alternative Funding by email or text.
- 1.4 The government will never provide a link to reach the online application portal. Instead, this can be found by searching for “**Apply for energy bill support if you do not get it automatically**” into the Gov.UK webpage search bar, or through an online search engine.

Rationale

- 1.5 The Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) provides a discount on energy bills of £400 for most households in Great Britain. This scheme is being delivered through domestic electricity suppliers in six instalments from October 2022 to March 2023. However, there are a number of households who pay for their electricity in a different way, such as through a commercial intermediary, and so will not receive support through EBSS. The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding (EBSS Alternative Funding) was set up to provide the payment to these households.
- 1.6 The EBSS Alternative Funding is a one-off £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households who have not received the main EBSS payment automatically to help with their energy bills between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023, but are still facing increased energy costs. Individuals will need to apply for the EBSS Alternative Funding via a Gov.UK portal. Local authorities will be responsible for distributing support payments to eligible applicants.
- 1.7 The Department for Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) expects eligible households to include those with a commercial landlord or intermediary, such as park home residents and some housing association tenants. The EBSS Alternative Funding is expected to reach a significant number of vulnerable people, including self-funding residents in care homes. BEIS is expecting approximately 900,000 households in Great Britain (around 3%) to be eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding. No household will be eligible for both the EBSS payment and an EBSS Alternative Funding payment.

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Role of Local Authorities

- 1.8 This Guidance is provided by BEIS to support local authorities to deliver the EBSS Alternative Funding to eligible households.
- 1.9 Households wishing to apply for an EBSS Alternative Funding payment should search for “apply for energy bill support if you do not get it automatically” on Gov.UK and follow the instructions there. All applications must be made via this central application route. No applications from other routes can be accepted or processed.
- 1.10 BEIS will then perform a number of verification and eligibility checks, before passing applications onto local authorities to perform some final checks and distribute payments. BEIS will reimburse local authorities for the cost of making the EBSS Alternative Funding payments through grants under section 13 of the Energy Prices Act 2022.
- 1.11 While EBSS Alternative Funding is available across the United Kingdom, this guidance applies only to the scheme delivered by local authorities in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales).
- 1.12 No support payments made by a local authority outside of the above scheme start and end dates (outlined in the table below) will be considered as eligible expenditure by BEIS regardless of the reason. Should a local authority choose to make a support payment outside of these dates it will be responsible for funding the payment.
- 1.13 When dealing with applications for funding, local authorities are encouraged to adopt the following principles as needed:
- use the eligibility criteria guidance and principles in this document to verify those who are eligible, taking into account a wide range of information
 - work together with other local authorities and, where appropriate, organisations such as charities that support local vulnerable people

Scam awareness

- 1.14 BEIS is ensuring that scam awareness messaging is prominent in public communications. This includes highlighting the differences between the main EBSS scheme, which is delivered automatically without the need for an application, and the Alternative Funding, where individuals have to actively make an application to receive the payment. BEIS is working with relevant stakeholder groups to cascade messaging about how EBSS Alternative Funding works and advise consumers how to respond when faced with a scam. If a local authority is approached by an applicant or other about a potential scam then please report details to the scheme using the contact details in Annex E, and the following advice should be provided:

“If you have received a scam message in relation to the EBSS Alternative Funding please report it. It is very important that this is reported promptly. Please send a screen shot of the message to report@phishing.gov.uk so that action can be taken.

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Forward text messages to 7726, and report websites via the National Cyber Security Centre at <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/about-this-website/report-scam-website>.”

Scheme Timescales

KEY DATES	
Scheme 'go live'	27 February 2023
Scheme closes to new applications	31 May 2023
Final date for payments to be posted in the local authority financial system	30 June 2023
Final date for payments to be defrayed from the local authority bank account	7 July 2023
Final date for scheme reconciliation data to be sent by a local authority to BEIS	31 July 2023

1.15 Further details on the Energy Bills Support Scheme can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/getting-the-energy-bills-support-scheme-discount>.

2. Legal and Regulatory Framework

2.1 Legal Basis

- 2.1.1 The EBSS Alternative Funding is underpinned by the Energy Prices Act 2022. That Act allows for the government to issue support for energy costs (section 13) and enables government to empower delivery partners to provide the support to recipients (section 15). The Act, and subsequent regulations, also provides for delivery of the funding through local authorities in Great Britain as Local Welfare Provision (see also Annex C). The Energy Prices (Designated Domestic Energy Price Reduction Schemes for Great Britain and Designated Bodies) Regulations 2022 (also in force) extends this designation to all district councils in England.
- 2.1.2 The support is intended to help households with their energy costs. The funds should not be used for any economic undertaking.
- 2.1.3 BEIS has confirmation from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that receiving EBSS Alternative Funding does not affect people's ability to claim other benefits, as well as confirmation from the Home Office that those with No Recourse to Public Funds can be recipients.

2.2 Subsidy Control Considerations

- 2.2.1 For the subsidy control rules to be engaged, various tests must be met one of which is that support from a public authority must be given to an economic actor, which means, a person or company placing goods or services on a market.
- 2.2.2 EBSS Alternative Funding is intended to be delivered to households across Great Britain through local authorities. Unlike EBSS or other energy bills schemes recently announced by HM Government, no businesses will be involved in either delivering or receiving this support.
- 2.2.3 Therefore, BEIS does not consider there to be subsidy control issues for EBSS Alternative Funding.

2.3 Data Sharing and Data Privacy

- 2.3.1 Local authorities, BEIS and contracted organisations will share personal and non-personal data in the form of reporting data, necessary for the purpose of enabling monitoring and to enforce compliance. This data sharing is governed by a Data Sharing Agreement between BEIS and local authorities.
- 2.3.2 The EBSS Alternative Funding data privacy notice is published online: <https://ebss.apply-for-energy-bill-alternative-funds.service.gov.uk/s/gb-privacy->

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notice. It sets out how BEIS will use the personal data collected from local authorities, consumers, contracted organisations and the rights of consumers. It is made under Articles 13 and 14 of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).

- 2.3.3 Local authorities must have appropriate data protection arrangements in line with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Local authorities must make clear to applicants that this data will be shared with BEIS.
- 2.3.4 Local authorities must ensure they meet the “Accountability” principle which makes it clear that they are responsible for complying with and demonstrating compliance with the UK GDPR. This includes keeping a record of processing activities under Article 30. For instance, records of any personal data breaches. Where the breach relates to the scheme, please notify BEIS through the contact details in Annex D.
- 2.3.5 Applicants are advised that they may be contacted for research purposes, and that their data will be shared with BEIS and appointed BEIS contractors for counter fraud, research and evaluation purposes. Their details will be held in a secure data system and they will not be contacted by any other third parties as a result. **All research is voluntary** and is not linked to the outcome of their application. They may withdraw their consent at any time if they change their mind. All contact details will be securely deleted from contractors’ systems after 2 years.

2.4 Searchlight Data

- 2.4.1 For the purposes of administering the scheme local authorities are permitted to utilise data held in DWP’s Searchlight data share, where there is a legitimate and proportionate case to do so. This can be for qualifying benefit claimants only, who will need to identify themselves as such during the application process.
- 2.4.2 Use of Searchlight is not mandatory, nor does it prohibit the use of other means to verify applications.

3. Communicating the Scheme

- 3.1 Local authorities must, as appropriate and practical, reference that the support payment is funded by HM Government in any publicity material, including online channels and media releases.
- 3.2 It is important to keep messaging consistent across the scheme. Local authorities should refer to the scheme as “EBSS Alternative Funding”. Any local communications concerning the scheme should include the need to make an application and provide guidance on how applicants can find the scheme on Gov.UK or through an internet search.
- 3.3 When publishing information on the scheme, local authorities should show due regard to the accessibility of the information to ensure different groups are reached.

4. Providing the Grant to Local Authorities

4.1 Principles

- 4.1.1 Where support payments have been provided to eligible recipients in line with this guidance and the scheme grant determination letter, BEIS will reimburse local authorities for the cost of providing EBSS Alternative Funding payments to eligible recipients.
- 4.1.2 Grant payments will be made under section 13 of the Energy Prices Act 2022.
- 4.1.3 All funds must be used for the sole purpose of providing EBSS Alternative Funding to eligible customers.
- 4.1.4 New Burdens funding will be provided to local authorities to cover the expected reasonable additional costs associated with the implementation of the scheme.

4.2 The Grant Payment

- 4.2.1 Initial grant payments will be made to local authorities in the week commencing 20 February.
- 4.2.2 Funding allocations will be based on BEIS estimates of the number of eligible households in each local authority.
- 4.2.3 Local authorities will be provided with eighty percent of the estimated cost of funding in a lump sum payment.
- 4.2.4 As part of the end of scheme reconciliation process local authorities will be provided with a balancing figure for remittance or recovery payment, reflecting the final true cost of making payments under the scheme.

4.3 Payment Reconciliation

- 4.3.1 Following the deadline for defrayal of payment to individual applicants on the 7 July 2023, a final payment reconciliation will take place.
- 4.3.2 To enable BEIS to complete the payment reconciliation, the local authority must submit the following detail to BEIS via email no later than the 31 July 2023 (full instructions will be sent to the LAs no later than 31 May 2023):
 - An excel spreadsheet showing (a) the value of each individual support payment;
 - (b) the Applicant Reference Number of the support payment (as detailed on Salesforce); (c) the date the individual support payment was posted in the local

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authority finance system; (d) the date the individual support payment was defrayed from the local authority bank account

- A written statement from the local authority's Section 151 Local Government Act / Section 95 Local Government (Scotland) Act Officer confirming the final payment date and amount
- A word table confirming the documentation provided and detailing the reason for any discrepancy in the figures. It is expected that the values on the Section 151 / 95 letter will match the value on the grant payment list, if they do not match then the local authority is required to explain why

4.3.3 Template documents for the above will be provided to all local authorities no later than the 31 May 2023.

4.3.4 The information provided will be used by BEIS to fully reconcile actual EBSS Alternative Funding payments made under the scheme against estimated allocations provided to suppliers. There will be a dialogue between BEIS and local authorities if required to agree the final reconciled figures.

4.3.5 Following the completed reconciliation BEIS will write to local authorities confirming:

- The total allocation of grant made to the local authority
- The value of eligible EBSS Alternative Funding payments delivered
- The balancing figure for remittance or recovery

4.3.6 Where a balance is due to local authorities BEIS will aim for this to be paid to the local authority in full within 30 working days of the reconciliation notification.

4.3.7 Any undispersed funding resulting from monies which exceed the total sum of payments delivered will need to be returned to BEIS in full within 30 working days of the receipt of the reconciliation notification. The notification will provide full details of how to make any payment.

5. Providing the Support Payment to Eligible Households

5.1 General Principles

- 5.1.1 The primary principle of the EBSS Alternative Funding scheme is to provide equivalent support to domestic households who have not automatically received EBSS support as they do not have a domestic electricity supply contract.
- 5.1.2 The scheme targets households who are responsible for paying for energy used in their primary dwelling as part of a service charge, rent or other arrangement, for example via a commercial electricity supply contract. Households who are not responsible for paying for their energy use are not in scope of the scheme.
- 5.1.3 In all cases the dwelling for which support is being claimed must be the sole or main residential address of the applicant. To be eligible for the scheme households must be able to provide sufficient proof of address to allow confirmation that the dwelling is their sole or main domestic residence.
- 5.1.4 Households must be resident at the eligible premises on the date they apply for the scheme.
- 5.1.5 Only one payment may be made per eligible domestic premises. Where an address comprises two or more separate eligible occupied domestic premises, each premises must demonstrate eligibility for an EBSS Alternative Funding payment.
- 5.1.6 All eligible applicants must receive the payment in full. For example, the support payment cannot be used to offset Council Tax arrears.

5.2 Eligibility Criteria

- 5.2.1 To be eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding applicants must meet the following criteria on the date of their application:
- The dwelling for which support is being claimed is the sole or main residential address of the applicant
 - The household is responsible for paying for energy used in the dwelling as part of a service charge, rent or other arrangement, and may, through these charges increasing have the impact of increased energy bills costs passed on to them between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023
 - The household is not eligible for or already receiving EBSS payments, either through the main EBSS scheme or the EBSS Alternative Funding, in whole or in part
 - The household dwelling is not a business premises or other form of non-domestic premises, is used wholly or mainly for domestic purposes, with the exception of

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businesses whose main business activity is to provide long term residential accommodation (landlords, care homes etc). Only households, and not the businesses themselves, may apply for EBSS Alternative Funding

- 5.2.2 These criteria apply to the address that is receiving payment. It is possible that an individual may move from an EBSS-eligible address to an EBSS Alternative Funding-eligible address. In this case, as long as the applicant meets the other eligibility criteria when applying for EBSS Alternative Funding, they will be considered to be eligible to receive the payment.
- 5.2.3 Local authorities should use their local knowledge and the definitions and criteria set out in this guidance to assist in making a decision on eligibility of a household for this scheme.

5.3 Households Eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding

- 5.3.1 Provided they can provide sufficient proof of address and are not otherwise ineligible, households eligible for EBSS Alternative Funding include:
- park home **residents**
 - housing association, social and private **tenants, and leaseholders, supplied via a landlord with a commercial meter**
 - partly and wholly self-funded care home residents (where they make any contribution to their costs, as opposed to NHS funded residents)
 - households in house **boats on residential moorings**
 - households on a **private electricity network, for example those supplied by a heat network**
 - off-grid households
 - **traveller households on authorised sites**
 - households in **non-permanent /supported accommodation**
- 5.3.2 In some circumstances, households may have been paid in part under the main EBSS scheme, but due to a change in circumstances (e.g. they had to move out of their own home and into non-permanent accommodation) are eligible to apply under EBSS Alternative Funding. Local authorities are not asked to check that change in circumstances, however they must still be otherwise eligible in order to apply.
- 5.3.3 Where one of these categories does not apply or where it is not materially clear whether a household falls into one of the eligible categories, the decisions on the eligibility of each household will be at the local authorities' discretion, provided the application is consistent with the scheme eligibility criteria set out in section 5.2.
- 5.3.4 If the premises contains more than one eligible household as defined in this guidance, for example care home residents, each of the households will be eligible for the payment. This does not include houses in multiple occupation (HMO) as they would only be eligible for one payment for the whole property in line with main EBSS scheme, rather than one payment per person.

5.4 Eligible Households on Business Premises

- 5.4.1 All businesses and other non-domestic premises are excluded from directly receiving EBSS Alternative Funding, except:
- Residents of businesses providing long term residential accommodation including landlords and care homes
 - Farmers living in domestic farmhouses on a farm
- 5.4.2 Where a small part of a domestic premises is used by a home-based business (for example a bedroom used as an office) this will not exclude a household as eligible, provided the other eligibility criteria have been met.

5.5 Households in Non-permanent Accommodation

- 5.5.1 Households in non-permanent accommodation (e.g. sheltered accommodation or caravans in holiday parks), where they are responsible for paying utilities, and have been resident for over 1 month prior to application, should be eligible subject to fulfilling other criteria. Households are asked to select that they live temporary accommodation as part of the application process. Local authorities will need to confirm their status, including requesting evidence.
- 5.5.2 Where a local authority is aware that a household has already received an EBSS Alternative Funding payment at a previous non-permanent address, the second application must be refused.

5.6 Exclusions to EBSS Alternative Funding

- 5.6.1 Premises that have a primary domestic supply contract (or deemed contract) are eligible for funding through the main EBSS scheme and are therefore excluded from receiving EBSS Alternative Funding. This includes:
- where a landlord rather than a tenant holds the domestic electricity supply contract, and therefore the landlord is eligible for the EBSS payment (and should have passed the benefit through to their tenants)
 - premises who have previously received one or more EBSS payments, including where a premises has multiple
 - unrelated meter points which have been excluded from EBSS eligibility
- 5.6.2 Second or holiday homes are excluded from EBSS Alternative Funding. The dwelling must be the sole or main residential address of the applicant.
- 5.6.3 The following groups are excluded from the scheme:
- households without a fixed address, for example house boats without a permanent mooring
 - students living in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA)

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- seasonal workers living in associated accommodation
- service occupiers – such as security, building caretakers, property guardians
- fully publicly-funded care home residents who do not contribute to their costs as these are covered by the NHS

5.6.4 The following circumstances would also not be eligible:

- the individual submits an application that is not within the appropriate timescales (e.g. after it ends)
- the applicant does not have a valid bank account (all Post Office card accounts (POca) have been closed as of December 2022 so the applicant will not be supplying POca details)
- somebody else in the property has applied – duplicate application
- address mismatch (e.g. wrong flat or house number)
- invented address or residents in address
- duplicate application but with different bank account details

6. Application Process

- 6.1 An application process is required for all applicants for the EBSS Alternative Funding payment. The application process for this scheme will be jointly administered by BEIS and local authorities.
- 6.2 BEIS has built a digital system using Salesforce to manage the application process. This will be accessed via an internet browser at [address]. The system will be used for:
- applicants to check their eligibility
 - applicants to apply
 - applicants to upload documentation needed for evidence
 - local authorities to receive applications
 - local authorities to access applicant information and related documentation
 - local authorities to process applications, including uploading of further information gathered
 - local authorities to provide data to BEIS on the status of applications
 - BEIS and local authorities to share applicant information and data through the system
 - local authorities to upload screenshots of evidence for assurance purposes
- 6.3 At all stages of the application process, both BEIS and local authorities must make clear to applicants that data may be shared between the organisations. The BEIS privacy notice, setting out how BEIS will handle personal data will be published as part of the application website.
- 6.4 The application process should enable local authorities to carry out the required checks (see section 8 “Role of Local Authorities”) as well as to comply with the minimum data reporting requirements (see section 11 “Monitoring and Reporting Requirements”).
- 6.5 The application process may be completed by a third-party where necessary, for example an individual with power of attorney can complete an application on behalf of an eligible applicant in a care home.
- 6.6 Applicants will not be able to re-access an application on the portal once it has been submitted. Therefore, they will not be able to change or add to their application once it is submitted. After submission, they will get a reference number through via email, if they did not provide an email address, they will get a notification by post produced through gov.notify.

7. Role of BEIS

7.1 BEIS is responsible for the scheme policy and design, administering the application process, conducting initial eligibility checks and scheme communications.

7.2 Application Portal, Assisted Digital Contact Centre and Application Management Portal

7.2.1 BEIS is responsible for administering the digital application systems and assisted digital call centre. All applications must be made through these routes and local authorities must not establish other routes for making an application.

7.2.2 The application system is accessed via an internet browser on Gov.UK. The system will be used for:

- applicants to check their eligibility
- applicants to apply
- applicants to upload documentation needed for evidence

7.2.3 BEIS is responsible for gathering application evidence related to bank details, address, and eligibility during the application stage of the scheme. BEIS will not verify uploaded documentation before it is passed to local authorities.

7.2.4 For applicants without a Council Tax record, a scan or photograph of a physical document, or a digital copy of at least one of the following documents should have been uploaded by the householder to Salesforce:

- valid UK driving licence (provisional or full driving licence)
- utility bill dated no earlier than 3-months before the application date (mobile phone bills and credit card statements are not accepted)
- benefits entitlement letter from within the last 6 months
- a current tenancy agreement - If an in-date agreement is not provided, local authorities should request written confirmation that the tenancy is current (e.g. an email from the landlord or Managing Estate Agent confirming the tenancy). Other relevant types of evidence, for example occupation certificates in Wales, could be used
- for permanent residents of a boat: a signed, dated (no earlier than 3-months before the application date) letter from a boat mooring provider that states the applicants name and address and that they live permanently on a long-term home mooring is also acceptable evidence.
- For any application from a care home resident, Salesforce should include a copy of an invoice in the name of the applicant for care home fees, or a letter on headed paper from the care home owner / management, to confirm the named applicant is partly or wholly self-funded. These documents must be dated no earlier than 3-months before the application date and include the name and address of the care home.

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- 7.2.5 Assisted digital phone support is available for applicants who are not able to make an online application- The freephone telephone number for the centre is 0808 175 3287. The contact centre is open Monday to Friday, 08.00 to 18.00.
- 7.2.6 The contact centre can, where required, support applicants through the application process, provide support with eligibility questions complete the online form on behalf of the applicant and provide applicants with details on their application status. If evidence is required as part of these applications, this evidence will be sent (either electronically or by post) to the call centre, who will upload it to the case.
- 7.2.7 The application portal and contact centre will close to new applicants at 23:59 on Wednesday 31 May 2023.
- 7.2.8 The digital application management system, Salesforce, will be used by BEIS and local authorities to:
- manage all applications
 - access applicant information and related documentation
 - process applications and manage checks
 - report data
 - provide assurance evidence

7.3 BEIS Initial Verification Checks

- 7.3.1 BEIS is responsible for conducting initial verification checks on all applications made and for retaining assurance evidence against these checks. BEIS will conduct the following checks:
- initial applicant eligibility checks
 - checks against eligibility for an EBSS payment
 - bank account verification
 - checks that the applicant has not already applied for EBSS Alternative Funding or has an application in progress
- 7.3.2 In the small number of cases where bank account verification not been possible, BEIS will request alternative bank account evidence at application stage.
- 7.3.3 Local authorities are not required to re-conduct the checks made by BEIS.

7.4 Forwarding Applications to the local authority

- 7.4.1 On a daily basis, applications which have passed the initial BEIS checks will be sent to the relevant local authority. This information will be available through the Salesforce system as a case management portal that would allow local authorities to see all applications for their area and update the central database in real time with progress. Local Authority Portal Guidance for local authority officials has been developed and provides a step-by-step guide for using the system. This is based on

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the user journey for local authority case workers and shows them, plus call centre staff, what screens they will see as they go through the process of logging in, viewing cases and moving cases along the built-in workflow. This is a more traditional user manual based on the specific set up BEIS has for the project. The Local Authority Portal Guidance also includes links to general Salesforce content where appropriate.

- 7.4.2 Applications which have passed BEIS checks will be passed to local authorities to complete final eligibility checks and if appropriate process payment. BEIS has designed the process with the aim of reducing to a minimum the number of occurrences where local authorities might be required to exercise discretion on issuing a payment.

7.5 Communicating the Application Status

- 7.5.1 Applicants who are deemed ineligible at the initial application stage will be informed by BEIS using gov.notify.
- 7.5.2 Once processed by local authorities, applicants will be informed in writing (paper or electronic) when an EBSS Alternative Funding payment has been provided or when an application has been rejected. These notifications will be issued centrally by BEIS using gov.notify. Information used to send these communications (successful, cancelled or rejected and the possible reasons why) will be supplied using the information that local authorities include in the Salesforce system, using the provided drop-down menu. It is important that local authorities ensure the system is kept up to date and a clear record of the basis for the local authority decision is uploaded. If the status is not correctly updated, this will prevent notifications being sent.

8. Role of Local Authorities

8.1 Local authorities in Great Britain are responsible for eligibility checks and payment processing.

8.2 Data Access and Management

8.2.1 Local authorities will manage access to and processing of applications through the Salesforce case management system. Full details of how local authority case workers will use this system are detailed in the Local Authority Portal Guidance issued to all participating authorities.

8.2.2 Local authorities will be able to download bank detail data for successful applications in the form of a .csv file from Salesforce. This is enabled to assist local authorities with managing payments to successful applicants.

8.2.3 No other information will be able to be downloaded from Salesforce.

8.3 Local authority checks

8.3.1 Local authorities are responsible for completing the following checks on all applications.

8.3.2 All checks must be completed for each application.

8.3.3 Records of the checks made and their outcomes must be retained for all applications.

8.3.4 It should be noted that there is a distinction between cancelling and rejecting an application on Salesforce. If the application is cancelled, another application for the same address can be made, whereas if the application is rejected, the BEIS duplicate check will not allow another application at the same address. The local authority portal guidance details when an application should be cancelled and when it should be rejected.

(a) Duplicate Application Check

8.3.5 The local authority should carry out a duplicate check, to determine whether a previous application at the same address has been cancelled. This check can be performed by searching within the Salesforce system.

8.3.6 If the application is a duplicate of a cancelled case, you should use the comments field to link the two cases (by reference number). The information provided in both applications should then be used to confirm identity and eligibility for payment. This is because, if you could not verify information, BEIS has asked the applicant to

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reapply and provide further information to help provide a clearer picture on whether payment is appropriate or not.

(b) Address check

- 8.3.7 The address check must confirm that the applicant lives at the eligible property.
- 8.3.8 Local authorities may use their discretion to confirm a match where there is a small discrepancy between names (for example a clear abbreviation).
- 8.3.9 Where the applicant has put an incorrect answer to "describe where I live", but all other checks and information that the local authorities hold on them show that they are eligible, the local authority can proceed with verifying the application as this information is mainly used for monitoring. In all cases, local authorities must make a clear comment to explain the difference and the basis for the final decision on eligibility reached.
- 8.3.10 Where possible, the address check should validate the applicant's address against Council Tax records. Where local authorities hold Council Tax exemption certificates (or other evidence for such an exemption) for addresses, these could also be taken into account.
- 8.3.11 If an application is submitted where the applicant's name conflicts with the Council Tax records the local authority must cancel the application. The applicant will be notified the person on the Council Tax record should apply instead.
- 8.3.12 Where there is no Council Tax record for the property, local authorities must assess the address evidence that has been submitted by the applicant at the application stage. If the evidence is unclear or missing details, local authorities should contact the applicant and request further evidence. If the address cannot be confirmed, the application must be cancelled.
- 8.3.13 Local authorities should rely on the uploaded material for verification of care home residents even where it holds evidence that a care home resident is partly or wholly self-funded. Other checks should only be used if the authority has access to the relevant information and the uploaded material does not suffice. If provided evidence and checks using locally held data are inconclusive, local authorities should contact the applicant and request further evidence. If the evidence shows the applicant is not eligible, the application must be rejected.
- 8.3.14 People living in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) are not eligible for the scheme. Local authorities should seek to identify all PBSA developments (university halls of residence) in their area and conduct an address check against these properties. Where a property is not included on this list the declaration from the application can be accepted as confirmation of eligibility.
- 8.3.15 If a local authority is aware that any application comes from any excluded premises or applicant (see section 5.6), for example where the address details indicate that

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the application is ineligible, the application must be rejected and treated as suspected fraud as per the process set out in section 9. If rejected, the comments box must be used to clearly state the reasons why.

- 8.3.16 If the applicant has selected that they live in non-permanent accommodation, local authorities must request proof that the household has been in residence for 1 continuous month (e.g. via confirmation from relevant housing authority), or if this information is not available can contact the applicant to ask for proof. This can be a temporary housing provider letter. The document must:
- be dated from the application date and no later than 1 month after
 - confirm the name and address of the accommodation
 - confirm the applicant name and address
 - confirm the applicant has been resident for a minimum of 1 continuous month prior to the date of application.
- 8.3.17 For all applications any information which is relied on by a local authority must either be uploaded to Salesforce or retained by the local authority for 7 years and provided to government as and when requests for assurance sampling.
- 8.3.18 A statement detailing how the Council completed the address check and why it is satisfied on eligibility. For assurance purposes, BEIS requires that any information which is relied on by a local authority must either be uploaded to Salesforce or retained by the local authority for 7 years and provided to government as and when requests for assurance sampling.
- 8.3.19 If Searchlight provides evidence used to make the decision, the comments section must be used to detail what the evidence was and how it helped confirm eligibility or otherwise. Sufficient information must be captured to allow the same search to be re-run if required for later assurance sampling.

(c) Second home check

- 8.3.20 The EBSS Alternative Funding support is only payable to householders on their primary residence – secondary or holiday homes are not eligible to receive this payment.
- 8.3.21 BEIS accepts that for many local authorities there is no clear way to verify whether a home is a primary residence and unless the local authority has a system in place which records whether a home is the primary residence (such as coding on the Council Tax system) then the self-declaration from the application can be accepted as confirmation of eligibility with no further check required by the local authority.
- 8.3.22 For any local authority that does record whether a home is the primary residence, then the local authority should where possible complete a cross check on any information regarding second homes to verify the self-declaration and upload evidence of that check to Salesforce for future assurance purposes.

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8.3.23 If at any stage in the future the local authority is made aware that property was not the primary resident of the application at the time of the application to EBSS Alternative Funding, then this must be treated as suspected fraud and the process set out in section 9 (Fraud and Error) of this guidance must be followed.

8.3.24 A statement detailing how the local authority completed the primary residence check and why it is satisfied on eligibility, along with copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce, must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce system for assurance purposes.

(d) Empty Property

8.3.25 The EBSS Alternative Funding support is only payable to properties that are occupied at the date of application – empty properties are therefore not eligible to receive a payment.

8.3.26 BEIS accepts that for many local authorities there is no clear way to verify whether a home was occupied at the date of application and unless the local authority has a system in place which records whether a property is empty, or the property is known to the local authority to be empty (such as coding on the Council Tax system) then the self-declaration from the application can be accepted as confirmation of eligibility with no further check required by the local authority.

8.3.27 For any local authority that does record whether a property is empty, then the local authority should complete a cross check to verify the self-declaration and upload evidence of that check to Salesforce for future assurance purposes.

8.3.28 If at any stage in the future the local authority is made aware that property was empty at the time of the application to EBSS Alternative Funding, then this must be treated as suspected fraud and the process set out in section 9 (Fraud and Error) of this guidance must be followed.

8.3.29 A statement detailing how the local authority completed the empty property check and why it is satisfied on eligibility, along with copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce, must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce system for assurance purposes.

(e) Bank account checks

8.3.30 Bank account checks will be conducted by BEIS using Paypoint at the initial verification stage and local authorities are not required to conduct further digital bank account checks.

8.3.31 Local authorities must conduct a check on all applications to ensure that the name on the bank account matches the name on the application. This is required because Paypoint verifies the banks details but not that the bank details align with the name on the application. Only bank accounts in the name of the applicant can be accepted currently. We understand that this may not be possible in some cases, for example where there is a local authority appointee. We are working to understand how the

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journey would look for these cases, and further guidance will be included when this document is reissued on 10 March. If you receive cases where the applicant name does not match the bank account, please place this on hold and inform your relationship manager of the case number. This will not count towards the 30 working days processing target.

- 8.3.32 In the case of a joint bank account the applicant name must match the name of at least one of the account holders.
- 8.3.33 Local authorities may use their discretion to confirm a match where there is a small discrepancy between names (for example a clear abbreviation).
- 8.3.34 In some cases, bank account details will not be verified at the application stage. In these cases the applicant is required to upload a bank statement to progress their application.
- 8.3.35 An application will not be shared with a local authority until requested evidence has been provided, and the data share will indicate that the bank account details remain unverified, and the local authority will carry out verification using the uploaded bank statement, including to confirm that this applicant has provided personal account details, rather than business account details.
- 8.3.36 In these cases the local authority must conduct the following verification checks on the uploaded bank statement:
- the bank statement was issued in the past three months
 - the bank account is in the name of the applicant
 - the bank account is personal and not a business account
 - the account number and sort code match those inputted by the applicant
- 8.3.37 For all applications local authorities may choose to use a bank account verification tool, such as Spotlight, if they wish to undertake further bank account checks. This is not mandated. If an application fails the additional verification it may be cancelled. If the result of this check is inconclusive, the bank statement check must be used as the source for confirmation.
- 8.3.38 If the bank details cannot be verified the application must be cancelled.
- 8.3.39 In all scenarios a statement detailing how the local authority completed the bank account check and why the eligibility decision was made must be submitted. Copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce (such as a screenshot from Spotlight), must be retained for assurance purposes.

8.4 Local Authority Correspondence with Applicants

- 8.4.1 The only correspondence undertaken by local authorities will be relating to checks that require further information from the applicant, e.g. bank account name does

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not match the name on the application form. Also, to confirm in each instance when an application from a household in non-permanent accommodation has been resident for at least 1 month.

- 8.4.2 BEIS will provide a template for this correspondence and it will be issued using local authorities' own systems. The Salesforce system cannot be used for this.

8.5 Appeals, Objections and Complaints

- 8.5.1 The scheme is designed to limit the discretion that local authorities are required to exercise. The application process will minimise applications from ineligible households. An automated check against a database of EBSS recipients will prevent those who have benefitted from that scheme from applying for the EBSS Alternative Funding. Applications that pass this check and have confirmed they believe they are eligible through the Gov.UK portal will then be sent to local authorities.
- 8.5.2 Where there is uncertainty in relation to information passed to local authorities to support an application and authorities make a judgement, BEIS will support the decision reached.
- 8.5.3 Any applicant objections or queries that are related to local authority validation, will initially be directed to the call centre to try and resolve.
- 8.5.4 If the call centre receives a query about why someone has been rejected/cancelled, they will look into the case and provide the information to the applicant. They will have access to Salesforce to be able to do this check in real time. If someone wants to challenge that decision, they are told to contact their local authority.
- 8.5.5 Where a complaint is made to a local authority about how a decision is reached, that relates to a decision made by a local authority, this must be handled through the local authority's standard complaints procedures and timescales.
- 8.5.6 If someone is enquiring about why they have not been paid or when they will be paid, they will be told that they need to wait 6 weeks / 30 days from making the application, then contact their local authority. There is no situation where the call centre will need to contact a local authority to pass on information or a complaint.
- 8.5.7 BEIS is ultimately responsible for the overall policy of the scheme, and so any complaint submitted to a local authority regarding criteria and objectives of EBSS Alternative Funding should be referred to BEIS (notifying that complainant) via the contact details at Annex D.

8.6 Local Authority Pre- and Post- Payment Assurance

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- 8.6.1 All local authorities are required to follow this guidance and conduct activity to provide assurance that all support payments have been paid out to eligible applicants in line with the eligibility conditions for this scheme.
- 8.6.2 Assurance checks must only consider eligibility at the point of award, any change in a recipient's circumstance after the support payment does not mean a payment was non-compliant or irregular.
- 8.6.3 The requirement to complete assurance on all support payments made by a local authority is set out in the Grant Determination Letter. The general principle also applies that local authorities are responsible and accountable for the lawful use of funds under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. The Section 151 / 95 Officer within the local authority is required to exercise their duties in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) guidance, ensuring their oversight of the proper administration of financial affairs within the local authority, including these support payments.
- 8.6.4 The process must cover the checks prior to support being paid, which are outlined in section 5 (Providing the Support Payment to Eligible Households) of this guidance, but also the post-payment assurance checking regime that the local authority will introduce to identify irregular payments which is outlined in section 9 (Fraud and Error) in this guidance.
- 8.6.5 The Section 151 / 95 Officer must also be satisfied that within their local authority appropriate action has been followed to reduce and challenge the risk of fraud. This includes managing the award of support payments in line with existing local authority policy. A Section 151 / 95 Officer Declaration confirming that the local authority has taken appropriate action in relation to fraud will be requested from all Local Authorities as part of the minimum assurance sample check completed by BEIS.
- 8.6.6 Local authorities may want to use their own pre-payment assurance processes. Such processes must align with the scheme eligibility criteria and the evidence collected is either uploaded to Salesforce (recommended) or retained for 7 years for assurance purposes.

8.7 Providing the Payment to Eligible Applicants

- 8.7.1 All eligible customers must receive a single £400 EBSS Alternative Funding payment – no pro-rated or other amount can be paid.
- 8.7.2 Local authorities should seek to ensure that eligible applicants receive payments within 30 working days of receiving the application from BEIS.
- 8.7.3 In all cases payments must be posted in the local authority financial system by the scheme closing date of 30 June 2023 and defrayed out of the local authority bank

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account by close of play on 7 July 2023. Any payments made after these dates, no matter the reason why, will not be reimbursed by BEIS.

- 8.7.4 The EBSS Alternative Funding payment must be paid by the local authority by bank transfer to the eligible bank account as submitted by the applicant at the initial application stage and verified as part of the application process. Payments must not be made to any other account.
- 8.7.5 At least one person in each local authority will have access to download the payment details to use in your own payment systems. The report should be run as frequently as required. You should be aware that the report will only pick up items that have been tagged for payment for 24 hours or more. This is to prevent payments being missed or accidentally tagged as paid when they have not. Once you have completed the download, you must run the “payment management” task. This will automatically convert all those cases downloaded into “paid” on the system and trigger the notifications. You must not run this option until after the download.
- 8.7.6 If the payment fails, for example because the account has been closed, the application must be cancelled and the applicant will be told to reapply with different bank details.

9. Fraud and Error

- 9.1 The government will not accept deliberate manipulation and fraud. Applicants found to be providing false information to gain support payments will face prosecution and any funding issued will be recovered, as may any payments paid in error.
- 9.2 Local authorities must ensure the safe administration of support payments and that appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate against the risks of both fraud and payment error. In this respect, local authorities are required to supplement existing controls with the digital tools for the scheme to support efficient, appropriate and accurate support payment awards.
- 9.3 If, at any stage in the process, a local authority detects any actual or suspected fraud related to EBSS Alternative Funding it must carry out the following minimum steps:
- investigate the fraud in line with its own anti-fraud procedures and may wish to pursue referral of the case to police, however referral is at the local authority's discretion
 - notify BEIS of the actual or suspected fraud through Salesforce
 - instigate recovery of any grant paid in line with the EBSS Alternative Fund Debt Recovery Guidance
- 9.4 Where local authorities identify that a fraudulent payment has been made the case record must be amended to record the following information:
- Payment Fraud: Type of fraud (Type of Fraud selections provided in dropdown)
 - Payment Fraud: £ amount
 - Fraud Money recovered: £ amount
- 9.5 Where local authorities identify that a payment has been made in error the case record must be amended to record the following information:
- Payment Error: Type of error
 - Payment Error: £ amount
 - Error Money recovered: £ amount
- 9.6 As monies are recovered the local authority must update the record accordingly.
- 9.7 Debt recovery should not wait until the outcome of any fraud investigation unless the local authority is specifically advised not to pursue recovery by the Police. If the local authority is unable to recover a debt related to actual or suspected fraud, then this can be referred to BEIS in line with process set out in the Debt Recovery Guidance.

10. Assurance

- 10.1 Post payment assurance will be carried out by BEIS to ensure the effective management of public money. BEIS will undertake detailed assurance checks on a subset of payments to assess whether appropriate and robust processes were in place to complete the minimum assurance for operating the EBSS Alternative Funding Scheme.
- 10.2 For all EBSS Alternative Funding payments made, at a minimum, local authorities must be able to evidence:
- The date the EBSS Alternative Funding payment was made
 - Evidence of the name of the bank account to which the EBSS Alternative Funding was paid
- 10.3 It is expected that evidence to support household eligibility checks completed by the local authority (detailed at 8.3 of this guidance) will have been uploaded to Salesforce at the point of application and/or checking. If it is not possible for a local authority to upload all evidence it has relied upon when completing its check (such as evidence from the Council Tax register) then the local authority must retain this for assurance checking.
- 10.4 The requirement to retain any evidence not uploaded to Salesforce applies to grant applications approved and rejected.
- 10.5 Local Authorities must retain all documentary evidence for a minimum of 7 years from the date of award of grant to evidence the award of grant and the assurance checks completed.

10.6 BEIS Post Payment Assurance

- 10.6.1 BEIS will undertake a sample review of Pre- and Post-Payment Assurance System (PPAS) on this grant scheme. The PPAS check will assess whether both BEIS and the local authority had an appropriate and robust process in place to complete the minimum assurance checks at the two stages of application.
- 10.6.2 A subset of payments will be selected to be assured will cover different applicant types and will be chosen proportionally to the number of payments delivered by a local authority and the potential risk BEIS identifies in the payments.
- 10.6.3 Local authorities will capture assurance evidence as they process each application. Checks on the selected PPAS samples will therefore be undertaken without routinely requesting further information from local authorities.
- 10.6.4 PPAS will not recomplete the assurance check for the local authority but if any issues are identified then these will be communicated back to the local authority with a

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recommendation that its assurance process is revisited to ensure compliance with scheme eligibility.

- 10.6.5 PPAS checks will be completed after a local authority has agreed a scheme reconciliation¹ with BEIS and full detail² on providing the requested PPAS sample will be sent to the local authority following the issue of a Scheme Reconciliation Letter.

10.7 Debt Recovery

- 10.7.1 Where assurance checks discover that payments have been made in error, noncompliance, or have been claimed as a result of fraud, initial recovery action must be undertaken by the local authority. Local authorities must notify BEIS of any error, noncompliance or fraud through Salesforce.
- 10.7.2 BEIS has published Debt Recovery Guidance specific to the EBSS Alternative Funding and this must be followed. All recovered funds must be notified to BEIS within 30 working days of receipt in line with the process set out in the Debt Recovery Guidance.
- 10.7.3 A local authority must follow the Debt Recovery Guidance to demonstrate that it has acted in a reasonable and practicable manner in attempting to recover funds.

¹ DESNZ completes a reconciliation of actual spend by Local Authority against the funds paid to that Local Authority on the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Funding grant.

² This will confirm the individual grants to be sampled, the detail to be submitted and the scheme specific Section 151 / 95 Officer Declaration.

11. Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

- 11.1 Use of the Salesforce application portal facilitates scheme monitoring and reporting and removes the need for local authorities to provide delivery reporting submissions to BEIS. As part of the application process local authorities must input data to the application portal and BEIS will undertake regular data collection directly from this source.
- 11.2 Data sharing and data privacy information is set out in section 2.3 of this guidance.
- 11.3 BEIS will use scheme data to support monitoring, evaluation and assurance of the scheme. This includes providing high-level performance reports including summaries of the number of payments made and total amount spent. We do this for a number of different reasons, including:
- Accountability – to provide a clear and transparent basis for why this policy has been implemented, and its progress over time
 - Efficiency – ensuring that we are maximising the value delivered from this public spending and ensuring opportunities for analysis and learning for the future
 - Effectiveness – ensuring that policy makes a positive impact and understanding the context of when that happens.
- 11.4 By using the case management system local authorities should continuously maintain up to date records including on the following data fields:
- open applications
 - applications for payment
 - closed applications
 - application outcomes
 - payment issue dates
- 11.5 For reporting purposes, data should be up to date by 12.00 on a Monday for data processed the previous week, or Tuesday if the Monday is a public holiday.

Annex A: Minimum Assurance Criteria to be Evidenced by Local Authorities

NOTES:

1. **BEIS will have completed an initial assurance check on an application to verify that it was not eligible to receive a grant through the EBSS main scheme prior to the local authority assurance checks**
2. **BEIS will require data to confirm individual payment date as part of the scheme reconciliation, this will not be requested through or detailed on Salesforce**

Beneficiary Type	Minimum eligibility criteria to be evidenced by local authorities – <i>evidence should already be uploaded to Salesforce by the applicant but if insufficient local authorities must obtain / upload appropriate evidence to satisfy all eligibility criteria</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a rented property • in a home that has a heat network, communal or district heating • in a residential park home • on a farm • in a caravan or mobile home 	<p>1) Duplicate application check The local authority must record that it does not have a record of a previous application matching the name and address of the case they are processing. If there is a previous application then the reference number must be added.</p> <p>2) Bank Account Checks (where necessary) An electronic bank account verification check is conducted by BEIS at the point of application and if successful local authorities are not required to re-conduct this check. Where this initial check is unsuccessful the applicant is required as part of the application to upload a bank statement from the past three months – this will require checking by the local authority. The local authority check is to verify that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the bank account is personal and not a business account • the bank account is in the name of the applicant • the account number and sort code match those inputted by the applicant <p>The local authority must confirm where required that the check has been completed. Copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce (such as a screenshot from Spotlight or any other digital tool used) must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce. A statement detailing how the Council completed the check and why it is satisfied on eligibility must be added.</p> <p>3) Address Check The local authority must verify that the applicant lives at the address as entered on Salesforce.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• the address must first be verified against the current Council Tax record<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If the address can be verified against the Council Tax record then no further checks on the address are required but a copy of the Council Tax screenshot should be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce (<i>if the local authority is unable to upload the evidence then a record of the evidence must be retained in the local authority system for a minimum of 7 years and must be made available to BEIS for checking if requested to support future audit</i>)○ If an application is submitted where the applicant's name conflicts with the Council Tax records the local authority must cancel the application• If the address cannot be verified against the current Council Tax record then the local authority must assess the evidence that has been submitted at the application stage <p>The address as recorded on at least one of the following documents must be verified by the local authority, and confirmed against the bank account address as recorded on Salesforce and verified by BEIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a valid UK driving licence (provisional or full driving licence)• a utility bill dated no earlier than 3-months before the application date• a benefits entitlement letter from within the last 6 months• a current tenancy agreement• other relevant types of evidence, for example occupation certificates in Wales <p>If address verification is not possible from either the Council Tax record or the documents uploaded as part of the application then the local authority must cancel the application. The applicant will be notified the person on the Council Tax record should apply instead. Copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce (such as a screenshot from Spotlight or any other digital tool used) must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce</p> <p>A statement detailing how the Council completed the check and why it is satisfied on eligibility must be added</p> <p>If Searchlight provides evidence used to make the decision, the comments section must be used to detail what the evidence was and how it helped confirm eligibility or otherwise. Sufficient information must be captured to allow the same search to be re-run if required for later assurance sampling.</p> <p>4) Second home check</p>
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	<p>BEIS accepts that for many local authorities there is no clear way to verify whether a home is a primary residence and unless the local authority has a system in place which records whether a home is the primary residence (such as coding on the Council Tax system) then the self-declaration from the application can be accepted as confirmation of eligibility with no further check required by the local authority.</p> <p>For any local authority that does record whether a home is the primary residence, then the local authority should complete a cross check on their systems to verify the self-declaration and upload evidence of that check to Salesforce for future assurance purposes. A statement detailing the additional check completed and why it answered the eligibility question, along with copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce (such as a screenshot from the Council Tax system) must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce (<i>if the local authority is unable to upload the evidence then a record of the evidence must be retained in the local authority system for a minimum of 7 years and must be made available to BEIS for checking if requested to support future audit</i>)</p> <p>5) Empty Property</p> <p>BEIS accepts that for many local authorities there is no clear way to verify whether a home was occupied at the date of application and unless the local authority has a system in place which records whether a property is empty, or the property is known to the local authority to be empty (such as coding on the Council Tax system) then the self-declaration from the application can be accepted as confirmation of eligibility with no further check required by the local authority.</p> <p>For any local authority that does record whether a property is empty, then the local authority should complete a cross check on their systems to verify the self-declaration and upload evidence of that check to Salesforce for future assurance purposes. A statement detailing the additional check completed and why it answered the eligibility question, along with copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce (such as a screenshot from the Council Tax system) must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce (<i>if the local authority is unable to upload the evidence then a record of the evidence must be retained in the local authority system for a minimum of 7 years and must be made available to BEIS for checking if requested to support future audit</i>).</p>
In a care home	<p>Checks 1 and 2 as per the first row</p> <p>3) Address Check</p>

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	<p>The local authority must verify that the applicant lives at the address as entered on Salesforce by completing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LA must validate the address eligibility against a copy invoice in the name of the applicant for care home fees or a letter on headed paper from the care home owner / management. The evidence must confirm the named applicant is partly or wholly self-funded, include the name and address of the care home and documents must be dated no earlier than 3-months before the application date. If evidence fails to include all the specified detail then the local authority should contact the applicant directly to request this evidence <p>Local authorities should rely on the uploaded material for verification of care home residents even where it holds evidence that a care home resident is partly or wholly self-funded. Other checks should only be used if the authority has access to the relevant information and the uploaded material does not suffice.</p> <p>Copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce (such as a screenshot from the Council Tax records system) must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce (<i>if the local authority is unable to upload the evidence then a record of the evidence must be retained in the local authority system for a minimum of 7 years and must be made available to BEIS for checking if requested to support future audit</i>) A statement detailing how the Council completed the check and why it is satisfied on eligibility must be added.</p> <p>If Searchlight provides evidence used to make the decision, the comments section must be used to detail what the evidence was and how it helped confirm eligibility or otherwise. Sufficient information must be captured to allow the same search to be re-run if required for later assurance sampling.</p> <p>Checks 4 and 5 as per the first row should be confirmed as “No”.</p>
On a boat	<p>Checks 1 and 2 as per the first row</p> <p>3) Address Check – The address as recorded on at least one of the following documents must be verified by the local authority, and confirmed against the bank account address as recorded on Salesforce and verified by BEIS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a valid UK driving licence (provisional or full driving licence) • a benefits entitlement letter from within the last 6 months • a signed, dated (no earlier than 3-months before the application date) letter from a boat mooring provider that

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	<p>states the applicants name and address and that they live permanently on a long-term home mooring</p> <p>If evidence fails to include all detail then the local authority should contact the applicant directly to request this evidence</p> <p>Copies of any evidence relied upon that has not already been uploaded to Salesforce (such as a screenshot from the Council Tax records system) must be uploaded by the local authority to Salesforce (<i>if the local authority is unable to upload the evidence then a record of the evidence must be retained in the local authority system for a minimum of 7 years and must be made available to BEIS for checking if requested to support future audit</i>)</p> <p>A statement detailing how the Council completed the check and why it is satisfied on eligibility must be added.</p> <p>Checks 4 and 5 as per the first row should be confirmed as “No”.</p>
<p>Non-permanent accommodation</p>	<p>Where a residence is known to be non-permanent accommodation but checks do not confirm this, additional evidence can be requested from applicants including those who can satisfy the evidence of name and address check</p> <p>Evidence of residence for 1 continuous month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary housing provider letter. The document must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ be dated from the application date and no later than 1 month after ○ confirm the name and address of the accommodation ○ confirm the applicant name and address ○ confirm the applicant has been resident for a minimum of 1 continuous month prior to the date of application.
<p>Eligible households on business premises</p>	<p>Evidence of eligibility</p> <p>Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the applicant is eligible against the following criteria. Acceptance of self-certification evidence will be at a local authorities discretion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant is responsible for paying for energy used as part of a service charge, rent or other arrangement. • The household dwelling is distinct and separate from any business premises that shares the supply • The dwelling for which support is being claimed is the sole or main residential address of the applicant.
<p>Somewhere that does not fit into any of these categories</p>	<p>Evidence of eligibility</p> <p>Evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the applicant is eligible against the following criteria. Acceptance of self-certification evidence will be at a local authority's discretion:</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The applicant is responsible for paying for energy used as part of a service charge, rent or other arrangement.• The dwelling is used wholly or mainly for domestic purposes, and is not a business premises or other form of non-domestic premises.• The dwelling for which support is being claimed is the sole or main residential address of the applicant. <p>Evidence of name and address check</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• address verified against Council Tax register• or where this is not available, address was verified against one of the following documents. The document must clearly show the applicant name, address and date:• full current UK driving licence (not a provisional driving licence)• utility bill from the past 3 months (cannot be a mobile phone bill or credit card statement)• bank statement from the past 3 months• current tenancy agreement• Council Tax exemption proof such as a bill or letter
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Annex B: Public Sector Equality Duty

- B1. As public bodies local authorities must consider equality in all decisions being made to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010, and publish information to show compliance with the PSED.
- B2. The aim of the PSED is to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- B3. For the purposes of this scheme BEIS has completed a PSED assessment, a copy of which can be sent out on request. Local authorities should consider PSED when developing any local delivery decisions but do not need to complete an assessment on the scheme.

Annex C: Legal Gateway that allows LAs to access DWP's Searchlight data for the purposes of the EBSS Alternative Funding administration, but only for applications where there is a qualifying DWP benefit claim.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) lawyers have determined that the EBSS Alternative Funding support payments can be classed as Local Welfare Provision, as defined in the Welfare Reform Act 2012. As such, and subject to local authority adherence to Data Protection legislation, local authority staff administering the EBSS Alternative Funding can utilise data held in DWP Searchlight data share, where there is a legitimate and proportionate case to do so, and where the application relates to an individual with a qualifying DWP benefit claim who has identified themselves as such during the application process.

Annex D: Contact details

BEIS

If you have any queries about the content of this guidance or the operation of the scheme, you can contact BEIS at the Business Grants mailbox: businessgrantfunds@beis.gov.uk

Assisted Digital Call Centre

The freephone telephone number for the centre is 0808 175 3287. The contact centre is open Monday to Friday, 08.00 to 18.00.

The expectation is that the call centre can complete the online form using the applicant's details. If evidence is required as part of these applications, this evidence will be sent to the call centre, who will upload it to the case before it is passed to local authorities. This option is available for local authorities and support workers who are supporting those who are unable to apply themselves.