

The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA  
CC: the Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP



29 September 2023

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing as a group of consumer organisations and charities to ask for urgent action to introduce a social tariff for energy – something that is desperately needed by millions of struggling households in the UK.

With winter fast approaching, short-term, targeted support is needed to protect the most vulnerable households in and on the edge of fuel poverty. These are people whose bills have become so unaffordable that they are having to make the desperate choice nobody should have to make – between heating and eating. But, as your government has itself acknowledged, we also need to work towards a longer term solution. We are therefore calling on the government to publish the crucial consultation it committed to a year ago on future protection for energy consumers.

Last year's Autumn Statement promised to "develop a new approach to consumer protection in energy markets, which will apply from April 2024 onwards," and said that the government "will work with consumer groups and industry to consider the best approach, including options such as social tariffs..." In April, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero reiterated that commitment, setting out an intention to consult in summer 2023 on the same. Despite these assertions, we are yet to see this consultation materialise.

The energy crisis is not over, and while the wholesale price of gas is falling, energy bills remain sky-high. Today, some 6.6 million households find themselves in fuel poverty after a winter that pushed many into making painful choices and created record amounts of debt. Currently £2.25bn is owed by UK households who are behind on their energy bills, up more than 70% over the past three years.

In the absence of the Energy Bills Support Scheme this winter, households will be facing bills 13% higher than the last, and energy costs are still substantially higher than they were before the crisis started. Forecasts show no sign of relief either – we can expect millions of people in low-income and vulnerable households to suffer many more years living in a cold home, rationing energy, and struggling to cook a hot meal. As families fall behind on bills, they will be faced with the double whammy of facing high costs and trying to drag their way out of energy debt.

This is a long-term problem that requires a sustainable safety net for these people. Anything else will be a costly sticking-plaster. There's now a significant risk that no new protections will be in place by the time they are desperately needed.

One of the most effective ways the government can address this enduring challenge is through the introduction of comprehensive targeted energy support, sometimes referred to as a social tariff. This would provide a deeper price protection for all households struggling with their energy bills.

This support would have numerous additional benefits for the country and would help meet your five key pledges. A social tariff would help to reduce inflation by bringing down the cost of energy bills. The money saved by households would likely find its way into local economic growth. It would also help slash waiting lists by reducing cold-related illnesses brought on by living in an underheated home.

We now collectively ask you to bring forward the consultation the government promised a year ago and help prevent millions more falling into fuel poverty in this country.

Yours sincerely,

**National Energy Action, Age UK, Citizens Advice, Energy Action Scotland, Fair By Design, Money Saving Expert, and Scope**

**This letter is supported by the following organisations:**

Access2advice  
ACE (Action in Caerau and Ely)  
ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England)  
Act on Energy  
Action Renewables  
Advice For Renters  
Age NI  
Allenergy  
Angus MacNeil MP (chair, Energy Security and Net Zero Committee)  
Asthma+Lung UK  
Awel Amen Tawe  
Barnardo's  
Belfast City Council  
Believe Housing  
Ben Lake MP (chair, Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency All-Party Parliamentary Group)  
Brighton and Hove Energy Services Co-operative  
Bro Myrddin Housing Association  
Bromley by Bow Centre  
Bryson Energy  
Building Communities Trust  
Cardiff Quakers  
Care & Repair Cymru  
Centre for Sustainable Energy  
Centre for Sustainable Technologies  
Changeworks  
Chartered Institute of Housing  
Christians Against Poverty  
Citizens Advice Canterbury  
Citizens Advice Gwynedd / Cyngor ar Bopeth Gwynedd  
Citizens Advice Rhondda Cynon Taf / Cyngor ar Bopeth Rhondda Cynon Taf  
Citizens Advice Scotland  
Citizens Advice South Lincolnshire  
Citizens Advice Swansea Neath Port Talbot / Cyngor ar Bopeth Abertawe Castell-nedd Port Talbot  
City of Doncaster Council  
Clean Slate  
Climate and Community  
Climate Cymru  
Climate Shop  
Clynfyw Care Farm  
Coastline Housing  
Community Housing Cymru  
Community Law Service  
Connecting Communities in Berkshire  
Croydon Community Energy  
Cumbria Action for Sustainability  
Datblygiadau Egni Gwledig  
Debt Justice  
Dolmens Climate Action Network  
EastSide Partnership  
Egni Cooperative  
End Fuel Poverty Coalition  
Exeter Community Energy  
Faith in Families  
Family Fund  
Ffynnone Community Resilience

Fife Council  
Food Aid Network  
Glen Housing Association  
Grampian Housing Association  
Green Squirrel  
Greenans Products  
Greener Futures  
Groundwork  
Gwyrddni  
Harvey Girls  
Hillcrest Homes  
Hjaltland Housing Association  
Home-Start Down District  
Independent Age  
International Longevity Centre  
Jigsaw Homes  
Leeds City Council  
Leonard Cheshire  
Lochaber Housing Association Limited  
Macmillan Cancer Support  
Marie Curie  
Melin Homes  
Mencap  
Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association  
Mid Devon District Council  
Money Advice Scotland  
Money Matters Money Advice Centre  
Motor Neurone Disease Association  
Muirneag Consulting  
National Debtline  
National Federation of ALMOs  
Newport City Homes  
Newydd Housing Association  
North Belfast Senior Citizens Forum  
North Somerset Council  
North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law Centre  
Northampton Partnership Homes  
Northern Housing Consortium  
NUS-USI (National Union of Students-Union of Students in Ireland)  
Older People's Commissioner for Wales  
Paragon Housing Association  
Parkinson's UK  
Personal Finance Research Centre  
Pontypridd Land Society  
Power Circle  
Public Voice  
Queens Cross Housing Association  
Race Equality First  
Rethink Mental Illness  
Royal National Institute for Deaf People  
Royal National Institute of Blind People  
Scarf  
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations  
Sense  
Single Parents Support and Advice Service  
South Seeds  
St Andrews Environmental Network

St Giles Trust  
Stepchange Debt Charity  
Stirling District Citizens' Advice Bureau Ltd  
Stop Climate Chaos Cymru  
Sustainable Wales  
Tai Pawb  
THAW Orkney  
The Action Group  
The Archbishop of Wales  
The Bevan Foundation  
The Coproduction Network for Wales  
The Cottage Family Centre  
The H&A Group  
The Mentor Ring  
The One Planet Centre  
The Welcome Centre  
Thirteen Ltd  
Thomas Pocklington Trust  
Tir Natur  
Trefnu Cymunedol Cymru / Together Creating Communities  
Trowbridge Pantry  
Tunbridge Wells Borough Council  
Turn2Us  
Wakefield and District Housing  
West Suffolk Council