



## Warm This Winter



6 May 2024

Dear Members of the Scottish Parliament,

Scotland is now at a political crossroads and it is vital that those who have suffered in cold damp homes throughout the energy bills crisis are not forgotten.

The new First Minister will need to make difficult decisions and will need to find political support inside and outside of their own party to pass legislation.

We urge you to put politics aside and support the Scottish Government to take the actions needed to help those in fuel poverty and to ensure all households can access affordable energy in the future.

A failure to do so will see Scottish households condemned to spend more winters in cold damp mouldy homes. The impacts of this will be felt not just in the suffering of families and individuals, but also on the NHS and the collective mental health of communities.

A quarter of the Scottish population experiences mould in their homes frequently or occasionally, according to research for the Warm This Winter campaign. For over [400,000 Scots, their homes are almost uninhabitable due to the cold and damp](#). [1]

Among the most vulnerable, the crisis is even worse. 69% of Scottish social workers told the Social Workers Union that they have seen the people they support living in cold damp homes. [2]

The health complications of this are potentially serious. Everyone remembers the tragic case of Awaab Ishak, but people young and old, with disabilities or with a range of health conditions are at risk. [3]

More broadly, the recent Scottish House Condition Survey identified 31% of households in Scotland were in technical fuel poverty in 2022, with official estimates for 2023 suggesting the figure has risen to 37%.

While energy costs may have reduced during 2024, they [remain 60% higher](#) than in 2021 and Ofgem has determined that £3.1bn of energy debt has been accrued by households across Great Britain, which is likely to increase. Scottish households are now likely to be in a collective £350 million of energy debt. [4]

In particular, we urge MSPs from across all parties to unite in support of:

1. A Heat in Buildings Bill which is ambitious in its vision for improving the energy efficiency and insulation of the nation's homes and contains a clear fuel poverty duty enshrined in the legislation.
2. The current Housing Bill that will enhance tenants' rights and provide financial protections for tenants during the ongoing cost of living crisis.

3. Additional Government support in future budgets and legislation to help households cope with the cost of living crisis.
4. Reintroducing the Fuel Insecurity Fund to help at least those most at risk of harm and struggling in energy debt.
5. The new Pension Age Winter Heating Payment being fundamentally better targeted than the Winter Fuel Payment that it replaces.
6. A strengthened framework of support for the renewables and offshore wind sectors and the fastest possible “just transition” for the oil and gas sector, as described in the Draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan.

These policies are supported by voters across the political spectrum.

Recent Opinium research found that over three-quarters of the Scottish public (76%) believe homegrown renewable solutions would improve energy security and 60% want to see gas for heating phased out with a proper insulation and heat pump plan put in place. [5]

On the other hand, the opponents of these policies include sections of an energy industry which has made more than [£420bn in profits](#) during the energy bills crisis.

We would be happy to meet with you to discuss the steps MSPs can take to help fix our broken energy system and end the cold homes crisis.

Yours sincerely,

End Fuel Poverty Coalition  
Energy Action Scotland  
Warm This Winter  
Fuel Poverty Action  
The Poverty Alliance  
Fathers Network Scotland  
Social Workers Union  
Parents For Future Scotland  
Disability Poverty Campaign Group  
Scottish Association of Social Work  
Groundwork UK  
National Pensioners Convention  
Changeworks  
Disability Rights UK  
Stirling District Citizens Advice Bureau Ltd  
Musselburgh Community Pantry  
Aberdeen Heat & Power Company Ltd  
South Seeds  
East Kilbride Housing Association  
Energy Agency  
Argyll, Lomond and the Islands Energy Agency (ALlenergy)  
Tighean Innse Gall (TIG)  
Scarf  
Sustaining Musselburgh

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition campaigns to influence government and other bodies to take action to end fuel poverty and thereby improve people's health and quality of life as well as seeking to reduce the cost of living, create jobs and negate carbon emissions in the process. It is a broad coalition of over 70 anti-poverty, environmental and health campaigners, local authorities, trade unions and consumer organisations.

For the latest list of members, visit <https://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/who-we-are/>.

Contact: [info@endfuelpoverty.org.uk](mailto:info@endfuelpoverty.org.uk)

Energy Action Scotland campaigns for an end to fuel poverty in Scotland and is the only national charity with this sole remit. EAS aims to develop and promote effective solutions to the problem of cold, damp and expensive to heat homes. Its membership includes organisations and companies, and individuals as well as charities and NGOs, advice agencies, housing associations, local authorities, academics, energy utilities, heating and insulation manufacturers and installers.

Visit <https://eas.org.uk/> for more information.

[1] Opinium conducted a nationally representative survey among 2,000 UK Adults from the 24th – 28th November 2023. Results were weighted to be nationally representative.

[2] The Social Workers Union invited members to respond to a survey between 25 January to 12 February 2024. 716 social workers responded, 63 were from Scotland.

[3] A recent report by the [Institute of Health Equity & Friends of the Earth](#) found that Cold homes are associated with mental health conditions and social isolation. They double the risk of adults developing new mental health conditions and triple the risk of exacerbating existing conditions. Cold homes are also associated with physical health issues like heart attacks, respiratory problems and impaired lung and brain development in children. The crisis is costing society tens of billions each year through ill health, increased bills, lost productivity and carbon emissions. For example, it's estimated that 1.7 million school days are missed across Europe each year due to illnesses associated with damp and mould, and UK rates are 80% higher than the EU average.

[4] Data from the Warm This Winter campaign suggests that Scottish Households account for 11% of UK energy debt which has been outstanding for more than 3 months - so that would be c.£341m of the £3.1bn total debt. Ofgem data only includes debt that is outstanding for more than 91 days and [Consumer Scotland estimate](#) that the real debt figure to be much higher.

[5] Opinium conducted a nationally representative survey among 2,000 UK Adults from the 15th – 19th March 2024. Results were weighted to be nationally representative.