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BY EMAIL ONLY

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To:

Re: Prevention in health and social care Prevention inquiry: call for proposals

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition is a broad group of over 70 anti-poverty, energy, environmental and health campaigners, local authorities, trade unions and consumer organisations and is also supported by academics and industry experts. For more information, visit

<https://www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk/>

The nature of the issue that the Committee should explore

We recommend the committee investigate the significant and well-established role of housing in health outcomes.

This would highlight the considerable preventative health opportunities of raising quality standards across our housing stock so everyone can reap the health benefits of a high-quality and accessible home.

Why it deserves attention from the Committee now

[Over 1,000 people died in England](#) as a result of living in cold damp homes in December 2022.

Analysis by the End Fuel Poverty Coalition of official data for December 2022, revealed that the [levels of excess winter deaths caused by cold](#)

homes exceeded those of December 2021 and were similar in level to the Covid-pandemic-affected data of December 2020.

Over the last ten years, the average number of deaths each winter in the UK caused by cold damp homes now stands at 7,409.

But cold homes don't just kill people, they have a wide ranging series of health complications:

- Cold homes can cause and worsen respiratory conditions, cardiovascular diseases, poor mental health, dementia and hypothermia (Institute of Health Equity) as well as cause and slow recovery from injury (PHE).
- Fuel poverty impacts people's physical health by causing higher levels of inflammation, measured by fibrinogen, a blood-based biomarker. Elevated fibrinogen levels have been strongly linked to higher risk of coronary heart disease, heart attacks, stroke and an increased risk of death (UEA).
- Illnesses linked to cold, damp and dangerous homes cost the NHS more than £2.5 billion a year (IHE). This equates to £6.9m a day (up from £3.6m a day in 2016, Kingston).

Therefore, the committee must investigate the immediate action that needs to be taken to improve standards within housing stock across the UK, particularly the cold, damp and energy-inefficient homes that damage our health.

How Government policy in this area could be developed or improved

The committee needs to examine responsibility and accountability for the poor standards of homes and the effect of cutting local authority budgets,

which has hampered local authorities' ability to inspect for hazards and enforce legal standards, putting families' health at risk.

It should examine proposals from the Warm This Winter campaign which would drastically improve the housing stock of the UK and therefore the health of the nation:

- Investing public money, attracting private capital and plugging the policy gaps - this requires an urgent investment commitment, front-loaded in the first year to roll out this emergency programme of insulation and heat pumps.
- Introduce the Energy Efficiency Taskforce , announced in the 2022 Autumn Statement, to deliver on this emergency, locally-led insulations programme.
- Empowering local authorities - by resourcing them with the capital and powers necessary to roll out these emergency response measures while mobilising thousands of local traders and contractors.
- The Government should use the earliest legislative opportunity to ensure delivery of EPC band C for social housing and privately rented premises by 2028, EPC band B for non-domestic premises by 2030 and EPC band C for the homes of those in fuel poverty by 2030. It should also confirm timelines for phasing out fossil heating systems.
- The Government should fulfil its 2019 manifesto commitment of £9.2bn on greening homes and buildings.

The benefits of implementing these policies would be significant:

- Households living in the least efficient homes will pay around **£916 more** per year on energy bills ([2022 figures, E3G](#)).
- If everyone living in homes below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C were improved to EPC C today, the aggregate saving would be **£10.6bn** each year ([E3G](#)).

- Insulating homes in Britain and installing heat pumps could benefit the economy by **£7bn a year and create 140,000 new jobs** by 2030 ([Cambridge Econometrics](#)).
- A retrofitting programme could sustain over 400,000 direct jobs and 500,000 indirect jobs by 2030 and over 1.2 million direct jobs and 1.5 indirect jobs by 2050 ([IPPR](#)).

The UK government should adopt a national public health strategy, and the committee should examine the vital role that safe, healthy and affordable housing should play within it as a preventive public health asset.