

IMPACT OF WINTER FUEL PAYMENTS ON DEATH RATES

Giving evidence to the House of Commons Work & Pensions Select Committee, End Fuel Poverty Coalition coordinator, Simon Francis, said:

“We’ve already heard evidence from charities painting a very bleak picture of how pensioners have suffered. What we would highlight is the [research from Age UK](#) showing that 35% of pensioners earning under £20,000 a year said their home was cold most or all of the time.

“One of the things we often talk about in relation to fuel poverty is just how [hidden it can be](#) - especially among pensioners, who are often reluctant to come forward and admit they’re struggling, even to their own relatives. You can easily imagine a situation where a pensioner puts the heating on when family visits, just to make it appear as though everything is fine, when in fact it’s not.

“We’re particularly concerned about the health impacts of this. The health campaign charity [Medact found that](#) 75% of frontline health workers regularly see housing-related illness, and 45% have discharged patients into housing they know will make them ill again. It’s staggering that health professionals are having to do that.

“In terms of impact, it’s obviously difficult to get the full picture from the health data, and we would strongly encourage the ONS, the Department of Health and others to report more regularly on the health effects of people living in cold, damp homes, with much greater use of hospital admissions data.

“What we have seen, however, is that in winter 2024–25, compared to winter 2023–24, there was an overall increase in the number of deaths across the population, according to ONS data for December, January and February. But the rise was much more significant among those aged 75 and over—an additional 3,359 deaths in that age group this winter compared to the previous one.

“And that was despite average winter temperatures not dropping below what we would normally consider to be dangerous levels. In fact, energy prices for the average household were around 10% lower than the previous winter. Yet even after factoring in trends in the data, we estimate that about 650 additional pensioners aged 75 and over died beyond what we’d normally expect. [1]

“That’s the impact. When you look at everything else and ask what changed, the key difference is that many pensioners were paying more for energy than they ever had before. Their bills were higher than they’d seen in their lifetimes.

“We’ve seen people self-disconnecting, living in cold, damp homes, and suffering as a result. And ultimately, the data show that more people—particularly older people—tragically died last winter.”

The University of York estimates that 3.2 million pensioner households are facing unaffordable energy costs, with around 964,000 in deep fuel poverty, meaning they spend more than 20% of their income on energy. [2]

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition, called on the Government to fulfil its £13.2 billion Warm Homes Plan, which would insulate homes of older people and cut energy demand, but is at risk of cuts to its budget. Simon Francis, said:

"We've heard the figure of £13.2 billion is what was promised in the manifesto. Obviously, there's been rumours in the media that it is under some threat and scrutiny. And if we don't get the full funding going into helping people, then you know the energy efficiency measures won't be delivered."

Later in the session, Ned Hammond from Energy UK also backed the Warm Homes Plan, saying: "We know that the Warm Homes Plan, which is looking to improve energy efficiency and invest in low carbon technologies, is forthcoming, and we'll see what that looks like that potentially could have a significant impact over the next few years."

Trust in Labour will be further threatened if the Chancellor scales back funding for home insulation and lowering energy bills, according to new polling released today, in echoes of the row over Winter Fuel Payments.

The research by Opinium reveals that nearly half (46%) of Labour voters say that any backtracking from Labour's manifesto commitment to invest in insulating the country's poor housing stock would further reduce trust in Sir Keir Starmer's government. [3]

Among those who voted for Labour in the last general election but aren't currently planning on voting for them again, well over half (56%) say it would reduce their trust in Labour - damaging the party's attempts to woo voters back from Reform, the Lib Dems, Greens and others.

ENDS

The full hearing can be viewed online:

<https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/071d3ded-96e2-4e9d-8d4e-22ca827cab6b>

[1] Data based on ONS figures published weekly for the 12 weeks covering December, January and February. Full [data and sources available online](#). They show the figure of 3,259 additional deaths among 75+ pensioners year on year [1a]. 653 deaths among 75+ pensioners could not be explained by the wider trend which saw the number of deaths among the whole population [1b].

The factors behind these deaths could also include a slightly colder winter, rises in the cost of gas reducing the ability of homes to stay warm or the impact of the seasonal flu strain. However, for some of the country's oldest residents, there was one major change in winter 2024/25 compared to previous years - the absence of Winter Fuel Payments for many and millions of pensioners living in hidden fuel poverty.

	All Age Deaths	65-74	75-84	85+	65+	FIGURE [1a] 75+ DEATHS	FIGURE [1b]	Factor in 2.68% increase
2023/24 Dec-Feb	143,720	21,473	42,574	58,386	122,433	100960	2023/24 Dec-Feb	100,960
2024/25	147,570	20,880	43,958	60,361	125,199	104319	2024/25	103,666

Dec-Feb							Dec-Feb WOULD BE	
Year on year difference	3,850	-593	1,384	1,975	2,766	3359	Difference from what might be explained by 2.68% increase	653
% change year on year	2.68%	-2.76%	3.25%	3.38%	2.26%	3.33%		0.65%

[2] Tables in Annex A and B [\[pdf\]](#). Official government figures used a different, flawed, model of calculating fuel poverty. For more discussion on this issue, read the [Coalition's response to the Government's fuel poverty strategy review](#). In 2023 [\[pdf\]](#), around a third of fuel-poor households don't qualify for any benefits - and that was before the WFP cuts, so this figure is likely to have risen.

[3] Opinium conducted a politically and nationally representative online poll of 2,050 UK adults from 14th - 16th May 2025.