

Charities call for a UK summit to address 80 needless winter deaths a day

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For immediate use

In response to new UK Government figures released today on fuel poverty levels in England charities National Energy Action (NEA) and Energy Action Scotland (EAS) release a new report which estimates over 9,600 frail and vulnerable people across the UK are at risk of dying throughout the coming winter months due to cold homes; 80 people per day. NEA and EAS are calling on all four nations' governments to hold an urgent summit to agree where new resources can be found to stop tragic winter deaths. The new UK Fuel Poverty Monitor also provides the latest national fuel poverty statistics and an update on the key aspects of policy which impact on 4 million fuel poor households as well as the population at large. The report warns:

- Cold homes increase risks of heart attacks and strokes via rising blood pressure
- Worsen respiratory illnesses such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) and asthma
- The report also highlights cold homes worsen arthritic, rheumatic conditions which increase propensity to falls

Peter Smith, Director of Policy and Research at NEA comments:

"We know cold, damp conditions have the worst impact for the most vulnerable members of our society and across the UK sadly we think they kill up to 80 people per day in the winter months. This is not acceptable in the fifth largest economy in the world. Cold homes also cause untold havoc to our national health services. This costs us all as taxpayers well over £1 billion a year as well as increasingly long queues to see GPs, get treated at Accident and Emergency or hampers efforts to discharge vulnerable patients out of hospital. We are calling for a joint ministerial summit on health and fuel poverty with representatives from across all four nations' governments. Now is a crucial time to review the key priorities across all UK nations for the coming winter and beyond".

Norman Kerr OBE, Director of Energy Action Scotland (EAS) continues:

“Encouragingly the links between cold homes and health are being acted upon across the UK and are already shaping local and national delivery. Many organisations are already providing leadership and good practice examples of preventative action. The Scottish Government needs to work in partnership to maintain this momentum and should create formal links between fuel poverty, energy efficiency delivery and the health sector, including building on the Scottish Public Health Network guidance and this should feature in the new fuel poverty strategy”.

Carole Morgan-Jones, Director of NEA Cymru added:

“We hope our recommendations will help put an end to ill health and deaths caused by the cold homes crisis in Wales. It is clear to me and our supporters more can be done to transpose a clear blueprint for action consistently at a UK, national and local level. In Wales we also want to see the new Public Service Boards for every local authority area outline how they intend to address cold homes and fuel poverty in their first Local Well-being Plans next year”.

Pat Austin Director of NEA NI who chairs the Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Coalition concludes:

“In Northern Ireland, health must play an upfront and central role in the new Outcome Based Programme for Government and this will require close alignment with the proposed action for a new Fuel Poverty Strategy. More can also be done to improve targeting, tailored advice and referrals to the health related fuel poverty schemes. The new UK wide Digital Economy Act should be adopted for all relevant Northern Ireland fuel poverty schemes. We also need a watching brief on home heating oil prices. In Northern Ireland home heating oil is the main fuel source with 68% of households reliant on this unregulated fuel to heat their homes. In January 2016 the price of oil was at an all-time low, but since then the price has increased by almost 50%”.

The report claims there is no central government investment in UK wide energy efficiency programmes. GB-wide resources that might help meet the costs of cold related morbidity are also declining. In England currently there is still no central government investment in fuel poverty and health related schemes or energy efficiency programmes overall. The report recommends that the new United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund and the National Productivity Investment Fund should support initiatives to meet fuel poverty commitments across the UK nations and more generally improve our unhealthy and inefficient housing stock. The report concludes there are over 12 million homes across the UK that are potentially damaging the health of their occupants and are less efficient than a modern home. Around 4 million contain households on the lowest incomes.

ENDS

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For a copy of the UK Fuel Poverty Monitor 2016 – 2017 Executive Summary visit:

<http://www.eas.org.uk>

NB a copy of the full report will be available by the end of Thursday 29th using the same URL.

National Energy Action (NEA) and Energy Action Scotland (EAS) are national charities working to end fuel poverty and the illness caused by cold homes across the United Kingdom

NEA and EAS have produced the UK Fuel Poverty Monitor every year since 2003-04

For more info on NEA visit www.nea.org.uk and follow us on Twitter @NEA_UKCharity.

For more info on EAS visit www.eas.org.uk and follow us on Twitter @EAS_Scotland

A modern home usually has an Energy Performance Rating Certificate of EPC band C or above

Low income is defined as less than 60% of median equivalised income after housing costs and fuel costs

Read the Government Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report (England), published on 29/06/2017 here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623108/Fuel_Poverty_Statistics_Report_2017.pdf