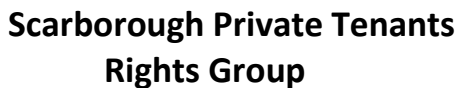


A minimum energy efficiency standard for rented homes from 2016

A joint statement supported by:



Campaning for Warm Homes



national union of students



Association for the Conservation of Energy



A minimum energy efficiency standard for rented homes from 2016

Rented homes are the worst maintained part of the housing stock and contain the highest proportion of the worst insulated homes.

- There are over 3.6 million households renting privately in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The sector has expanded by over 1 million homes since 2005 and is expected to continue to do so.
- People living in private rented homes are over four times more likely to be living in a cold home than people living in social rented homes. The least energy efficient properties – those with an energy efficiency rating of G – are twice as common in the private rented sector as in other sectors.
- 20% of private rented sector households live in fuel poverty. This rises to 42% in the households living in the worst insulated (F and G rated) properties.
- It costs the NHS in England an estimated £145m annually to treat people made ill by living in these dangerously cold homes.

We are calling for a new law ensuring that the coldest, most inefficient rented homes must be brought up to a minimum standard of energy efficiency from 2016. Over 180 MPs have signed a parliamentary motion (EDM 653) supporting this demand. Studies show that an estimated 150,000 households could be lifted out of fuel poverty by bringing the coldest rented homes (those with an energy efficiency rating of F or G) up to a higher standard. Tenants living in these homes will save an average of £488 on their annual energy bill and the UK will save 1.87 million tonnes of carbon dioxide every year.

The Green Deal offers landlords a mechanism to finance the upfront cost of improving their properties. Many may take up this opportunity. However, improving the very worst insulated, coldest homes cannot be left to chance. With so many renting households in fuel poverty the Green Deal will not be suitable for all and according to DECC's Impact Assessment for the Green Deal many landlords will not act without greater incentive.

We therefore warmly welcomed the announcement by Secretary of State Chris Huhne at the Second Reading of the Energy Bill on 10 May that the Government would introduce an amendment to the Bill to establish a minimum energy efficiency standard for rented homes.

The Government's declaration that it is unacceptable to rent out dangerously cold and draughty homes is a significant step forward. But this needs to be backed up by effective legislation.

Unfortunately, as it stands the legislation on the private rented sector in the Energy Bill is inadequate, lacks urgency and contains some significant loopholes. We support further amendments to strengthen the legislation in the following ways:

- **The minimum standard must start in 2016.** The Government's proposed 2018 start date is two years after the Government's legal target to end fuel poverty and means an unacceptable delay to all the benefits to tenants and taxpayers. The independent Committee on Climate Change in its recent 3rd Progress Report to Parliament specifically called for "earlier introduction of regulation for the private rented sector" stating that "there is no reason to delay implementation of this aspect of the proposals."

By 2016 almost 90% of private rented properties are likely to have changed tenants (the same proportion as will have turned over by 2018), giving landlords plenty of opportunity to make the necessary changes.

- The new law must make it an offence **to market the coldest rented homes** to let, and **letting agents should be able to be prosecuted** for letting dangerously cold homes below the minimum standard on behalf of a landlord. Not including marketing and letting agents will make the legislation unnecessarily expensive and difficult to enforce.
- **Properties with an energy efficiency rating below Band E - the 'minimum standard' - won't actually have to be improved up to Band E.** As the legislation stands, as long as a landlord undertakes the improvements for which financing is available under the Green Deal or Energy Company Obligation, it will be perfectly legal to carry on letting the property even if it is still below an 'E' rating and dangerously cold. This will create the situation where properties will be able to be let indefinitely while actually falling below the minimum standard. This significant loophole could generate considerable confusion for both tenants and landlords and mean an unknown number of cold rented homes could continue to be legally let years after the 'minimum standard' has come into force, effectively making it merely an aspiration.
- **Tenants won't be given protection against being evicted by unscrupulous landlords** when they ask for energy efficiency improvements or request the Green Deal. The Government has now said they will set up a broad-based stakeholder group to look at the issue but they don't currently have the legal powers to provide tenants with protection from retaliatory eviction if they decide that action is necessary. We believe that action is needed and the necessary powers should be included in the Energy Bill.

A new law to ensure rented homes meet a basic standard of insulation and heating could be a significant step forward for the UK. It could protect thousands of vulnerable families from fuel poverty and high energy bills, bring health benefits to those tenants currently living in cold homes and cut carbon emissions. Without the changes outlined above, the 'minimum standard' in the Energy Bill will fall short of that ambition and leave vulnerable households living in cold, inefficient rented homes for many years to come.

Signed by:

All Party Parliamentary Fuel Poverty & Energy Efficiency Group

Age UK

Association for the Conservation of Energy

Blackpool Residents Federation

Brent Private Tenants' Rights Group

Bristol Council

Camden Council

Camden Federation of Private Tenants

Centre for Sustainable Energy

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

Child Poverty Action Group

Citizens Advice

Consumer Focus

Crisis

Disability Alliance

End Fuel Poverty Coalition

Federation of Private Residents Associations

Friends of the Earth

Housing Law Practitioners Association

Islington Council

Macmillan Cancer Support

Manchester City Council

National Childbirth Trust

National Energy Action

National Home Improvement Council

National Pensioners Convention

National Union of Students

North West Tenants & Residents Assembly

People & Planet

St Helens Community Empowerment Network

Scarborough Private Tenants Rights Group

Stop Climate Chaos

Town and Country Planning Association

UK Business Council for Sustainable Energy

UK Public Health Association

UNISON

WWF - UK

38 Degrees