

## **Establishing a minimum energy efficiency standard for private rented properties.**

Private rented homes are the worst maintained part of the housing stock and contain large numbers of vulnerable households and those living in fuel poverty.

- 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 private rented sector has a greater proportion of the most energy inefficient homes - those in Energy Performance Certificate Band G. They are twice as common in the private rented sector as in other sectors.
- Half the properties in the private rented sector are not considered to be of a 'decent' standard by the Government.

The health consequences of poorly insulated properties are well established.

According to the Chief Medical Officer: "People living in poorly heated housing live in greater danger. Old, badly insulated properties offer significantly less protection against the risks of the cold than more modern, warmer dwellings."

It is therefore essential for Government to act to drive up standards of energy efficiency in the private rented sector.

Tenants must be empowered through access to up to date, high quality, reliable information about the energy performance of properties to enable them to make informed choices when seeking a property to rent, and landlords need information about the full-range of measures that can be made to improve the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of the property. The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of properties should be displayed in adverts and marketing materials, and shown to prospective tenants.

All landlords, regardless of the energy efficiency rating of their property, must be helped, incentivised and enabled to improve their properties through specially targeted advice, increased tax incentives and access to the Green Deal scheme, which must provide upfront low-interest finance for the necessary energy efficiency improvements, including in hard-to-treat properties.

But landlords need an authoritative route of reliable, appropriate information to guide them to this help. Establishing a local list of all rented properties and landlords would make this effective communication with landlords possible.

With such assistance many landlords may choose to improve their properties and local initiatives such as accreditation can help with this, rewarding the best landlords. However legislation is essential to protect households who live in the very worst insulated and least energy efficient private rented accommodation from high energy bills, ill health and fuel poverty. This must be done by setting a legal minimum level of energy efficiency for private rented properties and a date by which it will be an offense to let properties which do not meet this standard. Improving the worst properties cannot be left to chance.

The Government must also legislate to sweep away the cost, complexity and resource barriers which stop local authorities using their existing powers under the Housing Act 2004 to improve the worst properties.

The forthcoming Energy Security and Green Economy Bill must therefore:

- Establish a timetable for the introduction of a minimum legal standard of energy efficiency that a privately rented property must reach before it can be made available for rent.
- Set a deadline of no later than 2016 after which it will be an offence for a landlord to let a property which is an EPC Band F or G, and a date before 2020 by which it will become an offense to let a property of EPC Band E or lower.
- Give the Secretary of State a duty to issue statutory guidance to enable local authorities to take action to improve Band F and G properties with minimum cost and regulatory burden (by making them automatically constitute a Category 1 Hazard under the Housing Act 2004).
- Ensure local authorities have access to EPC data.
- Give the Secretary of State a duty to establish Incentives for landlords to meet (and exceed) the minimum standard and to provide access to a scheme of low-cost capital for energy efficiency improvements of rented properties.
- Give the Secretary of State the power to require landlords to register their properties with the relevant local authority.

### **All-Party Parliamentary Fuel Poverty & Energy Efficiency Group**

**Age UK**

**Association for the Conservation of Energy**

**Brent Private Tenants' Rights Group**

**Camden Federation of Private Tenants**

**Centre for Sustainable Energy**

**Citizens Advice**

**Crisis**

**Consumer Focus**

**Disability Alliance**

**Friends of the Earth**

**National Childbirth Trust**

**National Energy Action**

**National Home Improvement Council**

**National Pensioners Convention**