

A minimum energy efficiency standard for private rented properties

A joint statement supported by:



Campaigning for Warm Homes

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health



Disability alliance



MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Scarborough Private Tenants Rights Group



ISLINGTON



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.
- 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.

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." The annual cost to the NHS of winter related-diseases due to cold housing is £859m.

Without greater action by Government, poorly insulated and inefficiently heated private rented homes will continue to cost the UK dearly in terms of carbon emissions, poor health, fuel poverty and high energy bills.

We believe that tenants must be empowered through access to up to date, high quality, information about the energy performance of properties to help them make informed choices when seeking a property to rent.

All landlords must be helped and incentivised to improve their properties through targeted energy efficiency advice, a significantly increased Landlords Energy Saving Allowance tax incentive and access to the Green Deal, which must provide upfront low interest finance for the necessary energy efficiency improvements, including in hard-to-treat properties.

Landlords also need an authoritative route for 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 and incentives some landlords may choose to improve their properties. However many more will not do so without greater motivation.

We welcome the recognition by the Government that the poor level of energy efficiency in the private rented sector may need special attention. However, the measures in the Energy Bill do not go far enough and are unlikely to ever come into force.

Delaying a decision about whether to regulate to improve the least energy efficient properties will create uncertainty for landlords and lead to them delaying voluntary action, increasing the need for legal enforcement later on.

It is unacceptable for anyone to live in a property so cold and expensive to heat that it forces them into fuel poverty and makes them ill. This is true regardless of the level of take-up of the Green Deal by landlords. Improving the worst properties cannot be left to chance.

Legislation is essential to ensure private rented properties meet a basic standard of energy efficiency and protect households who live in the very worst insulated accommodation from high energy bills, ill health and fuel poverty.

This should be done by setting a legal minimum level of energy efficiency for private rented properties and a date by which it will be an offence to re-let, or market to let, properties which do not meet this standard. Action should not be conditional upon the outcome of a review of the take-up of the Green Deal in the private rented sector.

Local authorities also have a vital role to play in improving the sector and should be given greater powers to make progress as soon as possible and at a pace that is appropriate to local circumstances and resources.

Encouraging tenants to demand energy efficiency improvements from their landlord without giving them greater security of tenure risks pushing tenants and landlords into conflict and could even see tenants evicted as a result.

We believe the case for a minimum energy efficiency standard for private rented properties has been clearly made and that the Government should now show leadership by amending the Energy Bill to ensure it happens.

The Energy Bill must therefore:

- Set a deadline of no later than 2016 after which it will be an offence for a landlord to re-let or market for rent a property which is an EPC band F or G, and a date before 2020 by which it will become an offence to let a property of EPC band E or lower.
- Ensure that local authorities can take action to require improvements to the worst performing properties as soon as possible. Where a landlord fails to act, local authorities should be given the choice of carrying out the works themselves and charging the landlord.
- Require the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of properties to be displayed in adverts and marketing materials, and to be shown to prospective tenants.
- Give the Secretary of State the power to establish a local or national register of landlords and rented properties for the purpose of promoting energy efficiency in the sector.
- Give tenants security against retaliatory eviction when they make energy efficiency requests of landlords.

By legislating now to set a clear minimum energy efficiency standard from 2016 the Government will give long-term certainty and clarity to both landlords and tenants, and take firm action to tackle fuel poverty, high energy bills and climate change.

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

Brent Council

Bristol Council

Camden federation of Private Tenants

Centre for Sustainable Energy

Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

Citizens Advice

Consumer Focus

Crisis

Disability Alliance

End Fuel Poverty Coalition

Federation of Private Residents Associations

Friends of the Earth

Islington Council

Macmillan Cancer Support

Manchester City Council

National Childbirth Trust

National Energy Action

National Home Improvement Council

National Pensioners Convention

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

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