



## Fuel Poverty Bill

<b>Short title:</b>	Fuel Poverty Bill
<b>Long title:</b>	A Bill to make further provision about fuel poverty; and for connected purposes
<b>Second reading:</b>	Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> March
<b>Sponsoring MP:</b>	David Heath MP
<b>Purpose of the Bill:</b>	The Fuel Poverty Bill will bring in two measures designed to put an end to fuel poverty. These are:
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A major energy efficiency programme to ‘fuel poverty proof’ existing homes by bringing them up to the current energy efficiency levels enjoyed by modern homes</li> <li>2. The use of social tariffs to limit vulnerable households’ exposure to high energy bills</li> </ol>

The Fuel Poverty Bill was adopted by David Heath MP after being drawn second in the annual ballot for Private Members Bills. The Bill aims to ‘fuel poverty proof’ homes by improving the homes of those living in fuel poverty up to the energy efficiency standards of modern homes. It will also provide householders with a social tariff to give them the lowest energy prices until their homes are improved. It is sponsored and supported by MPs from all main parties and receives its Second Reading on **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March**.

In its latest Fuel Poverty Strategy progress report the Government admits that it is not going to hit its 2010 target to eradicate fuel poverty among vulnerable households. Urgent measures are needed to help people who are struggling to heat their homes. The energy measures in the Bill will reduce households’ energy use by up to 70 per cent.

The Bill is already backed by Consumer Focus, Association for the Conservation of Energy, Age Concern, Help the Aged, Child Poverty Action Group, Disability Alliance, Friends of the Earth, National Right to Fuel Campaign and the Centre for Sustainable Energy.

## **What is fuel poverty?**

A household is in fuel poverty if it needs to spend 10 per cent or more of its income on fuel to maintain adequate warmth and meet other energy needs.

This winter, more than five million households in Britain struggle to heat and power their homes. Those most affected are likely to be older people, disabled people, families on low incomes with children, large families, one parent families, people who are unemployed and people who are already in debt. Over 20,000 people die from the cold during the winter and many more become ill. Households try to cope in different ways, but often go into debt, and choose between food or warmth.

## **The Fuel Poverty Strategy**

The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 committed the Government to eradicating fuel poverty for vulnerable groups by 2010 and all fuel poverty by 2016. The Act required the Government to publish a Fuel Poverty Strategy (FPS) which it carried out in November 2001. Gas prices have gone up by 109% and electricity prices by 70% since 2003. Fuel poverty is higher than when the FPS was published – it has now reached crisis levels.

## **What can be done?**

The answer is simple. We need action now in the form of a radical energy efficiency programme. This should form the core of a renewed and fully costed Fuel Poverty Strategy

Putting energy efficiency at the heart of a fuel poverty strategy is not to say policies on fuel prices and incomes are not also important. But a boost to incomes should improve the quality of life of those on the poverty line, not pay for expensive heat that simply leaks out of the walls and windows.

We also need bold interventions in the British energy market. Our current market provides poor customer service, excludes the poor from the least expensive energy deals, and provides perverse incentives to consume more, rather than less, energy. To help consumers pay for their energy, the Fuel Poverty Bill makes provision for the fuel poor to pay the lowest prices on offer from their energy supplier.

Energy efficiency must be centre stage. But energy efficiency improvements since 1996 have only been allowed to account for 1.4 per cent of the downward pressure on fuel poverty. Energy efficiency programmes have not tackled 'hard to treat' properties - 48% of fuel poor households live in solid walled properties (compared to 29% of those not fuel poor) and 34% of fuel poor households live in 'off-gas' properties (compared to 12% of those who are not fuel poor). Cutting energy waste and achieving high levels of energy efficiency not only 'fuel poverty proofs' homes, it can help tackle climate change by cutting carbon emissions.

Creating energy efficient homes is also an economic investment in that it will help protect jobs in the construction industry and create a new, vibrant low carbon economy.

Supporting the Fuel Poverty Bill will eradicate fuel poverty through increasing the energy efficiency of domestic premises to high standards. It will require the Secretary of State to consult on and revise the Fuel Poverty Strategy, publish an Annual Report, specify the number of homes to be made 'fuel poverty proof' and ensure suppliers introduce a social tariff.

***Please attend the debate on Friday 20th March and support the Fuel Poverty Bill.***