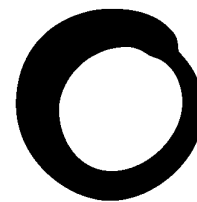


July 2011



**Friends of  
the Earth**

# Fact Sheet

## **Cold homes, health, carbon emissions and fuel poverty**

**This Fact Sheet gives some background facts and figures on the energy efficiency of the UK's homes, details on health problems associated with living in a cold house and the numbers of people living in fuel poverty.**

**For more information on Friends of the Earth's campaigning on these issues visit:**

**[www.foe.co.uk/warmhomes](http://www.foe.co.uk/warmhomes)**

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**Friends of the Earth makes life better for people by inspiring solutions to environmental problems.**

**We are:**

- the UK's most influential national environmental campaigning organisation
- the world's most extensive environmental network, with around 2 million supporters across five continents and more than 76 national organisations worldwide
- a unique network of campaigning local groups, working in more than 220 communities throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- dependent on individuals for over 90 per cent of our income

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### People in fuel poverty

- The latest Government figures show more than 5.5 million UK households live in fuel poverty<sup>i</sup> – meaning they can't afford to heat their homes to a reasonable standard. There are 4 million fuel poor households in England.
- 20 per cent of the 3.4 million households in England renting their home from a landlord or letting agency are trapped in fuel poverty<sup>ii</sup>. In the worst insulated properties 42 per cent of tenants can't afford to heat their homes properly<sup>iii</sup>.
- Consumer Focus research<sup>iv</sup> shows more than 150,000 tenants could escape fuel poverty if the coldest rented homes were improved to a basic standard of insulation and heating.
- Energy bills have rocketed by 125 per cent in the past six years, devastating fuel poor families. The average annual gas-electricity bill is now £1,095 - set to rise to £1,182 from 14 September 2011<sup>v</sup>.
- Poor insulation means at least £1 of every £4 spent on heating UK homes is wasted. Homes rented from a landlord or letting agency are the most likely to be the worst insulated.

### Costs and carbon savings

- Tenants living in the UK's coldest, health-hazard rented homes could save on average £488 a year on fuel bills if their homes were improved to a basic standard of heating and insulation, according to Energy Saving Trust research<sup>vi</sup>.
- This would save 1.87 million tonnes of climate-changing carbon dioxide each year<sup>vii</sup> – the equivalent of taking almost 800,000 cars off the road.
- The UK's homes account for 27 per cent of our carbon emissions – stopping them leaking heat is one of the quickest and cheapest ways to fight dangerous climate change.
- It would cost less than £900 to improve 37 per cent of dangerously cold rented homes (those with an energy efficiency rating of F or G) with cheap measures like loft and cavity wall insulation and draught

proofing. The overwhelming majority (74 per cent) of cold rented homes could be improved to a basic standard for less than £3,500<sup>viii</sup>.

### Health impacts and costs

- Government figures show 1.3million children in England are living in homes so cold they are a health hazard<sup>ix</sup>.
- A report for Friends of the Earth by UCL's Professor Sir Michael Marmot showed living in a cold house makes children twice as likely to suffer respiratory problems like asthma and puts teenagers more at risk of developing multiple mental health problems<sup>x</sup>.
- Treating tenants made ill by living in cold rented homes is estimated to cost the NHS in England at least £145million<sup>xi</sup> a year. 655,800 homes in England rented from a landlord or letting agency are so cold they are a health hazard, with a bottom-of-the-scale energy efficiency rating of F or G<sup>xii</sup>.
- Overall, the NHS spends £859 million each year treating cold-related illnesses due to poorly insulated homes<sup>xiii</sup>.
- Last winter nine pensioners an hour died in the cold weather – and there were an estimated 25,400 excess deaths in total during the winter of 2009-2010<sup>xiv</sup>.
- Finland, with much colder temperatures but better insulated buildings, has 45 per cent fewer excess winter deaths per head than the UK.

### Green jobs

- Research from Consumer Focus<sup>xv</sup> showed that kitting out the homes of people living in fuel poverty with a high standard of heating and insulation would create 35,000 jobs.
- Friends of the Earth's research shows fitting homes with insulation and renewable energy systems could create up to 70,000 local green jobs across England and Wales.

References

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- ii English Housing Survey, Headline Report 2009-10
- iii Energy Bill: Green Deal Impact Assessment, DECC, 2010
- iv <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/files/2010/12/A-private-green-deal.pdf>
- v Consumer Focus calculations July 2011 <http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/news/huge-energy-price-hike-puts-more-pressure-on-cash-strapped-consumers>
- vi Which Way Up – Advance Headline Findings, Energy Saving Trust, Feb 2011
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- ix calculation from DCLG officials, based on PQ 35684 to Greg Barker MP, 25 Jan 2011
- x Marmot UCL team report: [http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/cold\\_homes\\_health.pdf](http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/cold_homes_health.pdf)
- xi The health costs of cold dwellings, BRE and CIEH, April 2011
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- xiii Chief Medical Officer's annual report for 2009
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