

Every home should be a warm and safe place

NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION
STRATEGY 2021/2026

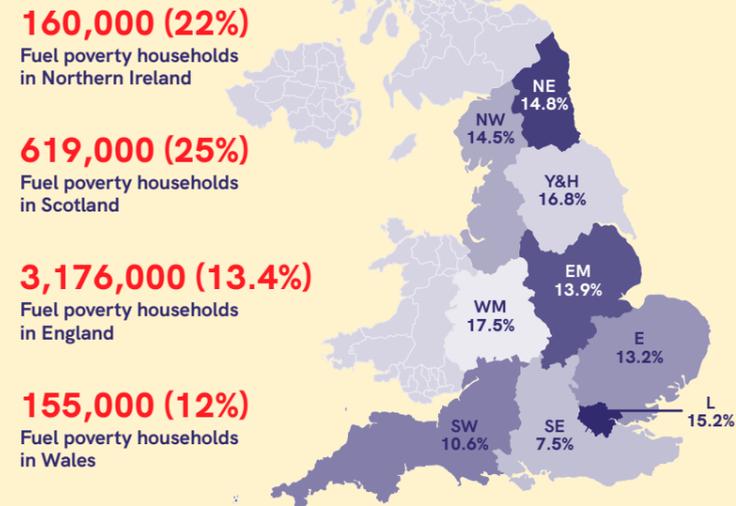


Action for Warm Homes



The challenge is huge

England's Fuel poverty map



Cold and damp homes take a heavy toll

Around 10k people die every year from the effects of a cold home

4x

Hospital admissions for COPD are 4 times more likely in winter months

£2bn

Cold homes cost the NHS more than £2bn every year in England and Wales

£

Every £ spent on making homes warmer brings £4 in health benefits

Over 4 million



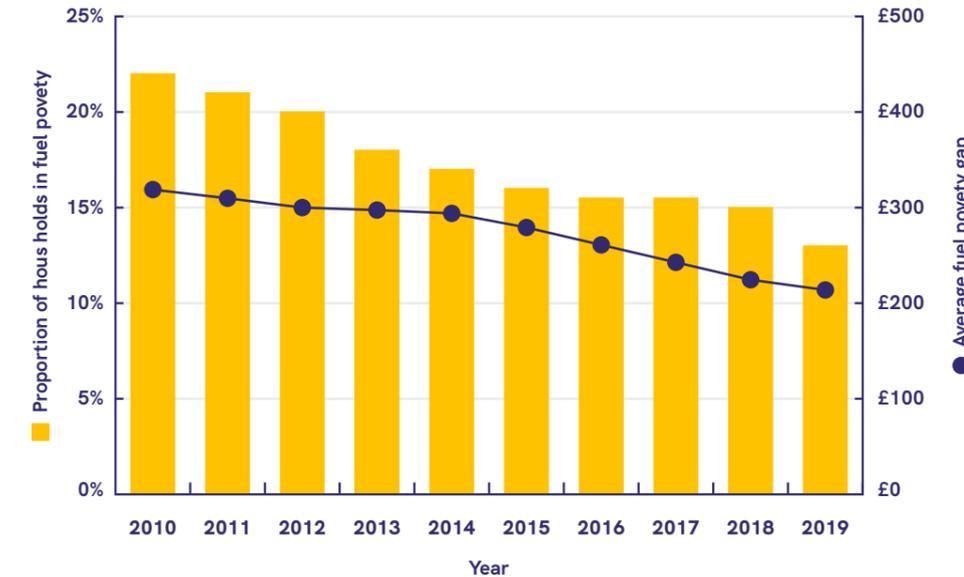
households across the UK are in fuel poverty

Over 1 million households can be considered in severe fuel poverty

1.4 million UK households with at least 1 dependent child live in fuel poverty

Progress made...

Following a steady decrease over time...



...the proportion of fuel poor households fell to **13.4% in 2019**

while the average gap fell to **£216**

...but more to do

England:

680,000 fuel poor households still live in the least efficient homes

Almost 1 in 4 households have issues with damp

Over two thirds of fuel poor households in England are not connected to the gas network

Northern Ireland:

Over 90% of households with solid walls do not have insulation

Wales:

More than 80% of fuel poor households live in inefficient homes

Over 500,000 of the poorest households in the deepest fuel poverty are reliant on other forms of expensive heating

‘Warm and safe homes mean better lives’

A warm and safe home should be enjoyed by every person across the UK. The harsh reality is that it is denied to millions because of poor housing, low incomes and high bills.

Fuel poverty affects over four million households across the UK. Eradication has been a target for governments for decades. Progress has been made, but it has been too limited and slow.

This can be the decade that we turn the page on piecemeal progress. The same steps that we will have to take to decarbonise domestic heating can end fuel poverty caused by poor, inefficient housing.

In truth, there should be no ‘debate’. We do not get to Net Zero without ending fuel poverty and we will not end fuel poverty unless we harness the drive towards Net Zero.

Forty years ago, NEA was established as a community project to help older people to insulate their homes. As NEA has grown, we have had the privilege to support tens of thousands of people in the most severe circumstances, in their own homes. Our advocacy and campaigning have made a difference for millions.

We are close to these households and we know their needs are immediate and urgent. But we also know that ending fuel poverty will take years of sustained action and that

unless we turn off the tap, we will have to keep mopping up the flood.

Our singular vision is **that everyone should be able to afford to keep their homes warm and safe.**

Warm and safe homes mean better lives. Fewer children trying to finish their homework in the cold. Fewer homes where the damp causes ill health and stress. More people able to see a way through serious debt or even to feed



Adam Scorer
Chief Executive



Claire Durkin
Chair

the prepayment meter. It means no deaths in the UK caused directly by a cold home.

Our Strategy sets out NEA’s three priorities for the next five years. Five years that must be the start of a decade of dramatic action and delivery.

Warm and safe homes can be, and need to be, at the heart of a just transition to Net Zero. Without programmes to transform the homes of those on low incomes and the least efficient homes, we will fail at both.

So, at the start of this decade we need to **Tackle the Worst First** and bring targeted investment to those whose conditions are gravest, whose need is greatest and who have the least ability to act themselves.

At the same time, the most vulnerable will continue to need immediate help with bills, with advice and support. While there is some good support available it is often determined not by need, but by a series of lotteries. We also need

Support Guaranteed — to connect people in need with the right support and for it to be available and consistent.

In all areas we need a focus on delivery. Those plans and guidance that sit on shelves and those targets that are routinely missed must be put into action. Our third priority is for **A Decade of Delivery**, not warm words, and for that to apply not only in energy and Net Zero policy, but in welfare provision, public health, housing standards, community advice and support provision.

NEA brings a unique combination of strengths to deliver these priorities. We will apply our evidence-based advocacy and our practical support for households. We know the scale of the challenge. That is why everything that we do, we do in partnership and we will look to build the biggest coalition of support to achieve our priorities.

We are impatient for change. We have treated symptoms and reduced the impact of fuel poverty for many. Now we have the opportunity, within the context of Net Zero, to take decisive actions so that everyone can afford to keep their home warm and safe.

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Coping Strategies

Cold homes prevent people from thriving

Spaces become smaller and options become limited, resulting in tough choices having to be made:



Going to bed early to stay warm



Only heating one room or avoiding using central heating at all



Spending the day in heated spaces such as a library, café or even A&E



Cooking using alternative sources such as a BBQ or portable stove



Not inviting friends or family into the home



Using unsafe, unserviced heating appliances or inappropriate devices like ovens to stay warm



Cutting back on electricity and using candles instead of lights



Leaving curtains closed all day or putting newspaper over windows



Cutting back on buying essential personal items, food, eating only cold meals or reliance on food banks



Formal or informal borrowing from friends and family

Fuel poverty can limit people's life chances and leaves them isolated from friends and family



Priority 1 Tackle the Worst First

The challenge of decarbonising domestic heat may be daunting, but it is also an incredible opportunity to bring together the drive towards Net Zero and the wider benefits of warm homes. But only if we can focus on both objectives together.



England, Wales, and Northern Ireland must be on track for all fuel poor homes to be band C by 2030

Well over 1 million fuel poor households across the UK still live in the least efficient homes. Unless we take action to end fuel poverty, we will not get close to our Net Zero ambitions.

NEA will demand priority for households on the lowest incomes and in the least efficient homes. We will make tackling the 'worst first' a litmus test for a just transition and a path to achieve fuel poverty targets across the UK.

We are not demanding the impossible. We are demanding that we seize the real opportunity that lies right in front of us.

What needs to happen:

- Government and industry programmes prioritise households on the lowest incomes and in the least efficient homes
- Construction and retrofit standards guarantee warm and safe homes for low income, fuel poor households
- England, Wales and Northern Ireland on track for all fuel poor homes to be band C by 2030
- Fair distribution of the costs of decarbonisation, with those on lowest incomes protected from rising policy costs
- Low-income households benefit from Net Zero innovation, by design



What we will do:

Support households

Connect vulnerable households with energy efficiency and low-carbon heating programmes, and expand the reach and relevance of our advice, training and education programmes to reach more fuel poor households. We will turn damp and cold properties into warm and safe homes so we can show just how people's lives can change when low carbon and warm homes are pursued together.

Build partnerships

Test and evaluate partner approaches to innovation, generating the greatest benefit for vulnerable households. We will work with groups that have a commitment to achieving Net Zero, to keep a real focus on affordably warm, low-carbon homes.

Advocate and influence

Drive the 'worst first' principle across policy development, be a devil for the detail across government and industry policy and programmes and we will campaign to keep the decarbonisation of heat and the eradication of fuel poverty in lockstep.

Priority 2 Support Guaranteed

For millions of people the challenge is to find a way to survive the day. NEA supports people who cannot afford the cost of a warm and safe home and who have no good way of coping with the reality of fuel poverty.

The support that exists is welcome, but often neither good enough, nor available when needed. Households can be failed by the lotteries of postcode, platform, tenure, or circumstance. Those lotteries, and the gaps in provision that people fall through, need to be closed.

NEA will ensure that the support we deliver will have the greater value and impact. We will lead by example in how we support households and we



will use our insight and experience to improve the standard of support for all fuel poor households.

What needs to happen:

- ▀ Every household struggling to afford the cost of a warm and safe home receive appropriate support and advice
- ▀ Energy firms understand their customers' needs and step forward to help
- ▀ Those on lowest incomes receive the greatest help and protection on prices, policy costs and debt support
- ▀ Utility companies work together to deliver consistent systems of support for households and communities

Lowest incomes must receive the greatest help and protection on prices, policy costs and debt support



What we will do:

Support households

Lead by example and deliver exceptional support that meets client needs. We will strengthen our capacity to support more households and community partners, work with partners across industry programmes to raise standards and outcomes and use the insight from our own support services to improve the design and delivery of such programmes.

Build partnerships

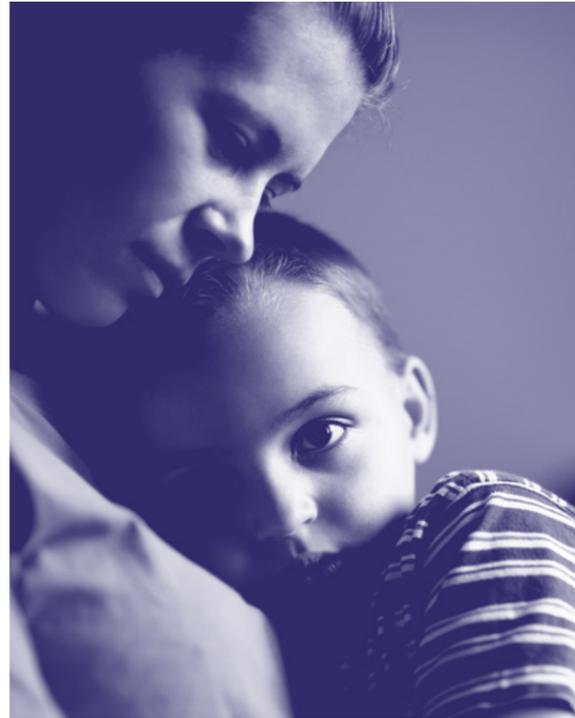
Be a critical friend to companies and public bodies who want to have a positive impact on the fuel poor, bring the water and energy sectors closer together to build stronger support packages for people struggling to afford essential services. We will bring our experience to support governments, regulators, trade bodies, consumer groups and others to intervene effectively.

Advocate and influence

Make the experience of fuel poor households bear down on policy and programme design and delivery. We will campaign for the greatest protection from rising prices, bills and policy costs for fuel poor households and make the positive case for how resources and programmes can have the greatest impact for those in greatest need.

Priority 3 A Decade of Delivery

Strategies, standards and targets that could help deliver warm and safe homes exist across many sectors, private and public bodies, local and national government.



Early deaths from cold homes must be a top five priority for public health bodies

They should be greater than the sum of their parts. They should amount to comprehensive action to reduce fuel poverty and deliver warm homes. But, to make any real difference, they need to come off the shelf and be put into practice.

NEA will campaign for coordinated action that understands the value of warm homes and drives implementation and enforcement across national and local governments, public bodies, regulators and others.

What needs to happen:

- National fuel poverty strategies in place and delivering on ambitious targets
- Ill health and early deaths from cold homes is a top five priority for public health bodies across the UK
- Policies that impact on incomes and energy prices are compatible with national fuel poverty strategies across the nations
- Local and national enforcement of policy, including landlord responsibilities, is robust and supports positive changes on the ground



What we will do:

Support households

Deliver community support projects that support and highlight the challenges of key groups and issues. We will clearly show the wider economic, social and health benefits for fuel poor households of a warm home and work with diverse professionals to find more routes through to fuel poor households.

Build partnerships

Bring coalitions of organisations and individuals together, nationally, regionally and across issues to raise fuel poverty up the agenda and draw out the connections between fuel poverty and other important issues.

Advocate and influence

Promote the benefits of action on warm homes for public health, loneliness, educational attainment, local economies and productivity. We will ensure accountability by working with parliamentarians, keep up pressure on enforcement actions and hold public and private bodies to account for their obligations and responsibilities.

‘As focused on what we do as on what we want others to do’

Our vision is that everyone should be able to afford to keep their homes warm and safe. It drives everything that we do and everything that we ask of others.

We know the transformation we want to bring for people in fuel poverty. To achieve that we will need NEA to be as effective and impactful as we can possibly be. We will be just as focused on what we do as on what we want others to do.

We put the experience of fuel poor households at the heart of what we do and through our own capabilities, authority and commitment to working with others, we will become an even more effective and influential champion for affordable, warm and safe homes.

Give people in fuel poverty a louder voice

We will not make progress unless more people understand what living in fuel poverty is like and what the wider benefits of warm and safe homes could be.

- Grow our advocacy and campaigning capability and impact
- Tell powerful stories of people affected by fuel poverty directly to key audiences
- Ensure the voice of people in fuel poverty are prominent in debates about a Just Transition

Putting policy into practice

We need to raise the standard of support for fuel poor households. We will expand our Policy into Practice model to make our experience and insight count and improve practice for others.

- Use NEA project insight and direct research to demonstrate the experience of fuel poor households in the strongest terms to policy makers
- Work with partners and researchers in the UK and beyond to increase the body of evidence for warm and safe homes

Without a big and broad fuel poverty movement we will not succeed. Come and be a member, partner, or supporter. Work with us www.nea.org.uk

Diverse and Sustainable Funding

Like any charity NEA needs secure and sustainable funding. We have to bring a lot of influence to bear over the next five years. Our challenge is to bring new income streams into the charity through a strong fundraising team, great advocacy projects and compelling arguments for funders.

- Deliver more sustainable funding to support NEA’s advocacy and campaign priorities
- Help all our funders understand how their support and partnerships transform lives

Working more flexibly and effectively

Post-Covid, every organisation is looking at how to work smarter and more flexibly. Our committed and passionate staff are our greatest strength and, after the challenges of the pandemic, we are committed to making their working lives simpler, more effective and rewarding.

- Strike the best balance in working patterns for the charity, our staff, clients and partners
- Review our information processes and systems to make us more flexible, efficient and produce better data about capacity, capability and impact

A bigger and stronger movement

Everything that we do, we do in partnership with others. We see no other practical way to have the scale of impact needed. In any case, aside from the practical benefits, working in partnership is in our DNA.

- Build our membership base so we can connect with more organisations who can support fuel poor households or lend their voice to our campaigning
- Work with more industry partners in energy and water partners to support their customers, make communities more resilient, innovate and raise standards across their sectors

Contact us:

 @nea_ukcharity

 Nationalenergyaction

 national-energy-action

 0191 2615677

 www.nea.org.uk

 **Newcastle Head Office**
West One,
Forth Banks,
Newcastle upon Tyne.
NE1 3PA



Action for Warm Homes