

# TACKLING FUEL POVERTY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION MANIFESTO 2023



*Action for Warm Homes*  
Northern Ireland

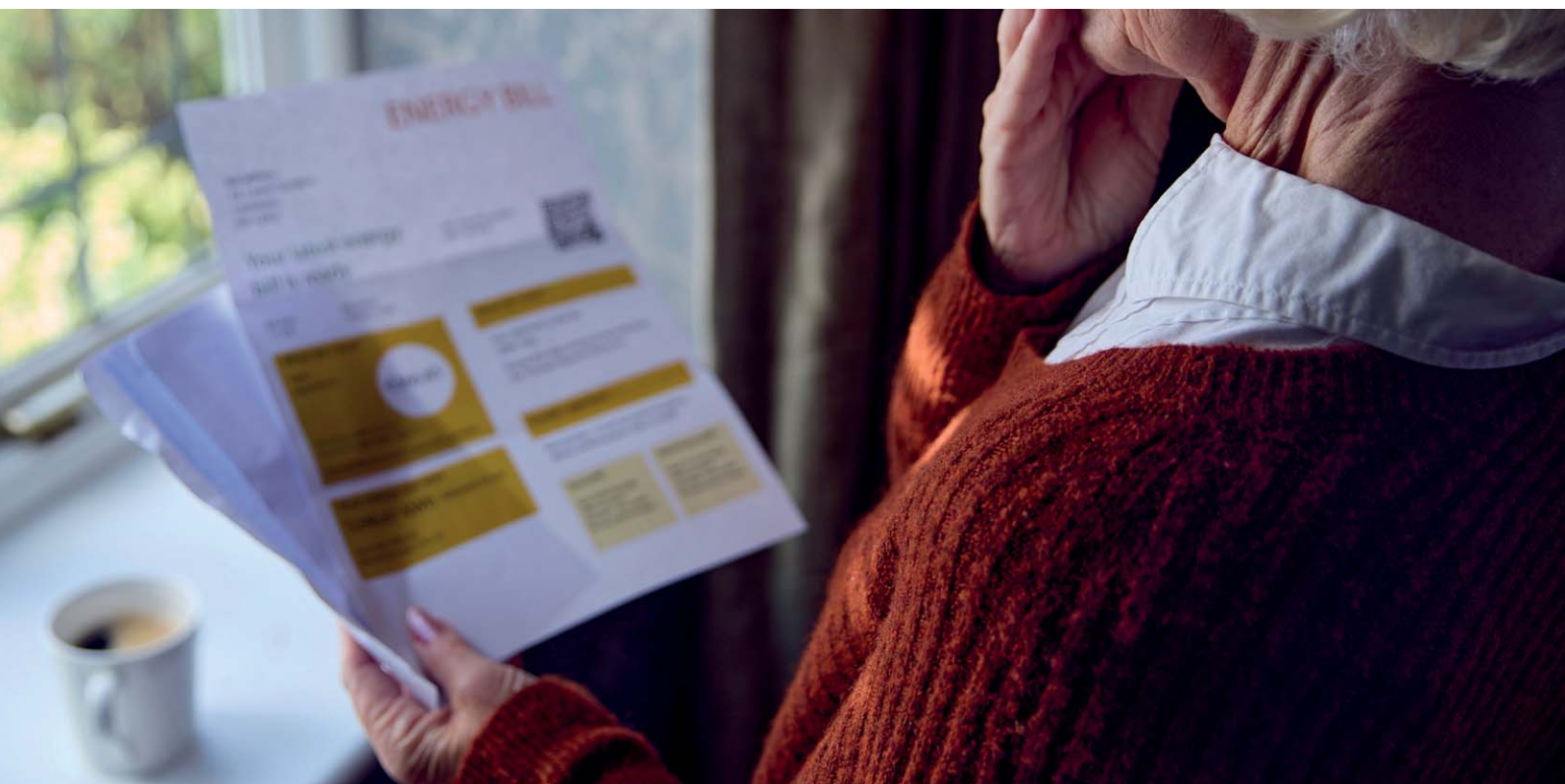
**Northern Ireland is in the midst of a Fuel Poverty crisis. Over the past 18 months, NEA has experienced a significant rise in the number of households seeking emergency support as they can no longer afford to keep their homes warm and safe, due to soaring energy prices and wider cost of living pressures.**

In June 2022, we undertook an NI-wide representative survey to assess the impact of rising energy prices on households. The findings of this study are stark, with the results showing that at least 45% of households are living in fuel poverty and the situation only looks likely to get worse. 80% of households have already cut down on their central heating, and most worryingly, more than 1 in 10 households told us they have had to forego meals to meet the rising energy costs.

**This means that choosing between heating and eating is very much a reality for around 100,000 homes in Northern Ireland.**

When asked about the impacts of the cost of living on health and wellbeing, 29% of households told us that there has been a direct negative impact on their health and 75% of households admitted to being worried about paying for the cost of energy. They are worried about keeping their homes warm and safe.

**Urgent action is needed to improve health outcomes and support the most vulnerable people who are at most risk of needless death and morbidity.**



**In the absence of a functioning Northern Ireland Executive, our local councils have a considerable role to play in supporting fuel poor homes. Ahead of the upcoming local council elections, NEA are calling on candidates and parties to commit to tackling Fuel Poverty in their communities by supporting 3 key pledges:**

**1. Establish an Energy Efficiency Champion to support households in your council area.**

It is estimated that poor insulation means around £1 in every £4 currently spent heating UK homes is wasted. Improving the energy efficiency of households needs to be considered as the 'first fuel'. Establishing an Energy Efficiency Champion to support households in your council area has the potential to reduce energy bills and lift households out of fuel poverty.

**2. Deliver targeted interventions to support fuel poor homes during periods of cold weather.**

Without dedicated and targeted support, low income and vulnerable households face real hardship during periods of cold weather, particularly during the winter months. NEA frequently encounter households who have gone days without access to energy and heat. Committing to the delivery of targeted interventions can ensure that the most vulnerable in our society are not left in the cold for extended periods. We encourage all councils to adopt the methodology demonstrated in our Warm and Well programme.

**3. Commit to ensuring a 'Just Transition' towards net zero.**

The transition to decarbonisation represents a significant change in energy policy in Northern Ireland and it will mean that consumers will be required to change how they heat and power their homes. This will be a challenging journey for many households as they will be required to learn new skills and adopt new behaviours to make efficient use of emerging technologies. To support this change, provisions will be required to make the transition as simple as possible for energy users. It is imperative that there is clear information, advice, and support for all.

Renewable energy generation requires significant upfront investment on the part of a householder. Even where this cost is covered by existing subsidies it is at best part funded, meaning households must find a significant amount of money upfront in order to access the low carbon alternatives. This is simply not possible for lower income and vulnerable households. NEA believe that local councils should play a proactive role in addressing this disadvantage, ideally through the provision of grants to low income and vulnerable homes to enable them to transition towards decarbonised heat and power.



**Action for Warm Homes**  
Northern Ireland



*Action for Warm Homes*  
Northern Ireland