

Closing Coments on Warm this Winter petition & debate



End the Forced pre-payment Meter scandal

From David Kilner - Campaign Coordinator - Climate Cymru:

We thank you, the Petitions Committee, for recognising the seriousness of the issue the petition raised (forced pre-payment meters) and utilising your power to investigate not only the serious injustice being metered out on people in Wales and across the UK but the wider systemic issues that have unravelled.

In light of the Senedd debate of the 1st May, triggered by this petition, we were requested to add any closing comments.

We'd like to state clearly that this issue is certainly not closed.

Not for the record levels of fuel poverty and debt that the people of our communities are enduring. Not for the fact that forced pre-payment meters are back on the table. Last winter we interviewed people joining community meals - 'I only *heat one room, and eat one meal.*' Over and over. *'The hearth is the heart of the home and mine is off and I dont know if it will survive'*.

There were 285 recorded excess deaths in Wales in 2022/3 as a result of people living in cold damp homes. This is just the tip of the iceberg. The record fuel debt and rising extreme debt, alongside some of the highest levels of poverty in a generation will see the same pattern of force pre-payment meters play out, people dying in and because of cold homes.

We urge you to do all in your power to alleviate this.

Hold Energy firms to account:

We urge you to **call the energy firms back to the Senedd**

- **Monitor and scrutinise the implementation of their code of conduct - do not wait for another crisis to unfold.**

As AM Jack Sergeant stated in opening the debate - 'We should not trust the suppliers to mark their own homework.' As a year on despite a temporary pause - forced pre-payment meters are back on the table for 7 energy firms and thousands of households in Wales.

- **Provide the evidence to Ofgem and push to change the code of conduct to reflect the real vulnerabilities of our communities**

There are worrying gaps in the mandatory code of conduct with regards to both the upper age limit of 75 and the defined pre-school age of just 2.

Many of our own social support mechanisms and public health recognise greater health vulnerabilities in the over 65 - the UK winter payment scheme even working towards those born before 1957.

The Institute of Health Equity has undertaken rigorous research in to the impact of cold homes. *Left out in the Cold - The Hidden impact of Cold Homes states* 'Babies in cold homes do not spend their calories on developing lung tissue, neural pathways, and other crucial physiological drivers of health - rather, they spend their calories trying not to die of hypothermia and hypoglycaemia.'

A 2 year old is a baby as is a 3 year old and a 4 year old in a critical time of development. Cold damp homes are the catalyst of sustained, cascading and escalating health issues.

There should be no need to remind you that 100s of thousands of forced pre-payment meters were fitted including in to the homes of some of the most vulnerable long before any parliamentary scrutiny (Senedd or at UK government occurred).

We will refer you to this report of this year -

<https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/left-out-in-the-cold-the-hidden-impact-of-cold-homes>

Energy Efficiency measures & legislation across the Housing sector:

We urge you to escalate and accelerate the **urgent role out of energy efficiency measures and legislation** to housing (addressing both social & private housing) - some of the leakiest and least efficient in Europe.

There are short term actions to create long term solutions to the unfolding health and energy crisis in our homes - improving energy efficiency measures and mandating them at a faster rate is needed. We welcome the activity of the Warm Homes programme but stress that it must go further and faster to meet the scale of the health, debt and energy poverty that is growing.

Energy for All: A social Tariff

We urge you to move forward pressing the UK government with urgency to commit to and enact **a social tariff - ensuring energy is available for all.**

' We need the Energy For All guarantee of essential energy, so no one is ever cut off because they are short of cash" - Jonathan Bead, Policy and Parliamentary worker for Fuel Poverty Action.

Home-grown Community Energy -

We urge you to move swiftly to enable and empower small scale community renewable energy projects and a wider just transition through our own medium and larger scale renewable energy projects - in which communities benefit and are fairly compensated for new infrastructure.

We, the people of Wales can be unburdened of fossil fuel capital, the driver of the energy profiteering, the crushing debt on households, the health implications it enforces on us in

cold homes - through a social tariff, a warmer homes scheme that meets the challenge, local community renewable energy and a transition that takes our fortune back in to our hands.

We urge the Senedd where it does not have the statutory powers to loudly apply pressure on UK government to make the changes it needs so that our communities can be afforded basic health, basic necessities of life - rekindle the hearth of houses and our communities.

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