



Our Right to **Heat** and **Eat**

A huge and growing problem



HELPTHEAGED WE WILL





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Many older people in London face increasing difficulty in heating their homes. According to the Greater London Authority, some 740,000 London households (of all ages) are living in fuel poverty (needing to spend more than 10% of their income after housing costs to heat their homes)¹. National Energy Action estimates that 49% of those in fuel poverty are aged over 60, and that the number of households in fuel poverty has more than tripled since 2003².

Borough Age Concerns and Older People's Forums meet many older people who respond to growing energy costs by choosing either to Heat or Eat (to quote the title of a recent TV documentary). Other ways in which older people save on their gas and electricity bills include heating only one or two rooms in their home, staying in bed or for some, spending more time out in heated locations such as shopping centres.

Fuel poverty has very harmful effects on older people's health and every winter, some older Londoners die unnecessarily because of the cold. Last year some 3300 out of a total of 3800 so-called "excess winter deaths" in London were of people aged 65 or more. These figures were 41% up on the previous year.

Why?

Fuel poverty is caused both by many older people's low incomes, and by the rising cost of energy bills. A large proportion of older people do not claim the full benefits to which they are entitled.


Many older people find utility bills and energy tariffs difficult to understand and are not getting the best possible deal. Web-based information is particularly difficult for many older people to access. Similarly, some are disadvantaged in dealing with telephone call centres.

For example, older people (and others on low incomes) often get a very poor deal if they use prepayment keys.

Many expect energy bills to stay high or increase in future: this would mean many older people continuing to have trouble heating their homes in winter.

1 Draft London Housing Strategy, 2009;
<http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/new-figures-show-government-fuel-poverty-strategy-in-disarray.asp>
Nationally, the Government uses a definition of fuel poverty based on comparison with total income, while the GLA looks at net residual income after housing costs.
2 NEA, London Regional Fuel Poverty Briefing, February 2009.





Many older Londoners live in homes where it is difficult to improve energy efficiency: for example homes with solid walls where cavity wall insulation cannot be fitted.

Both older tenants and older homeowners can suffer fuel poverty: many older homeowners are "asset rich and income poor" and therefore unable to afford insulation or other home improvements from their incomes.

Older people who are just above the income threshold for means tested benefits or access to particular schemes are often left unable to access any help.

Some older people and disabled people face health-related barriers to having home improvements done. For example some people are unable to have loft insulation installed because they are unable to clear heavy and bulky objects from their loft.

What is being done?

A wide variety of advice and support is available to older people locally – including through local Councils. Support includes grant schemes like Warm Front.

However, what is advertised varies considerably from borough to borough and some areas are better off than others.

Information about what is available also varies: it is often hard to find and not in a form which is easy for many older people to use (for example when information is provided mainly on websites)

Utility companies offer social tariffs for lower income and vulnerable customers. They also operate Priority Register schemes for vulnerable customers.

However, information about social tariffs is not very well known and older customers often find it unclear. Social tariffs also are not always the best possible value for money. Similarly, many people do not know about Priority Register schemes.

The Government's Warm Front scheme is currently not well targeted to help the poorest and most vulnerable households who are in fuel poverty.





What do we want to happen?

We want all London local authorities to:

Provide a consistently high level of support all across London for older people who want to reduce their fuel bills or improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

In other words, we want them to:

Provide a One Stop Shop bringing together welfare benefits advice, energy efficiency advice, referral to home improvement grant schemes and handyperson/repair schemes

Provide resources and funding for advice and information in a form which is accessible to older people

Develop a strategy to fight fuel poverty in their area

Include targets linked to reducing fuel poverty when Local Area Agreements are reviewed

We want utility companies to:

End the unfair price disadvantage for customers using the key tariff

Publicise social tariffs very prominently and make sure they represent the best value for customers

Publicise Priority Register schemes very prominently

Make all information clear and accessible to older people, using plain English and community languages

Think of older people when planning communications (for example use of websites or phone systems)

We want London regional government to:

Raise public awareness of how people can get advice and help with welfare benefits and home improvements

Include action on fuel poverty for older people in regional strategies and action plans

We want national government to:

Target the Warm Front scheme more effectively to older people on lower incomes, so that more older people can have work done



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আপনি যদি এই ভাষায় এই দলিলের কপি পেতে চান, এই নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা নিচের ঠিকানায় আমাদের যোগাযোগ করুন। এই সেবার জন্য প্রশাসনিক মূল্য দিতে হবে।

જો તમને આ દસ્તાવેજની નકલ આ ભાષામાં ખર્ચની કિંમત તો, તો નંબર પર ફોન કરો અથવા નીચેના સરનામે અમારો સંપર્ક કરો. આ સેવા માટે વહીવટી ચার্જ લાગુ પડે.

यदि आप इस दस्तावेज की कपी इस भाषा में चाहते हैं तो आप हमें नीचे दिये गये नम्बर या पते पर सम्पर्क कर सकते हैं इस सेवा के लिए प्रशासन शुल्क लगेगा।

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਇਕ ਕਾਪੀ ਇਸ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਹੇਠ ਲਿਖੇ ਪਤੇ ਤੇ ਸਾਡੇ ਠਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ। ਇਸ ਸੇਵਾ ਲਈ ਪ੍ਰਸ਼ਾਸਨਕੀ ਫੀਸ ਲਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ।



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اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کی نقل اس زبان میں درکار ہو تو، براہ نمبر پر فون کریں یا نیچے دیے گئے پتے پر رابطہ کریں۔ اس خدمت کے لیے انتظامی اجرت وصول کی جائے گی۔

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على نسخة من هذه الوثيقة بهذه اللغة، المرجو أن تتصل هاتفياً بالرقم أو راسلنا على العنوان أدناه. ويجب أداء رسوم إدارية على هذه الخدمة.

An επιθυμείτε ένα αντίγραφο του εν λόγω εγγράφου σε αυτή τη γλώσσα, παρακαλούμε καλέστε μας ή επικοινωνήστε μαζί μας στην παρακάτω διεύθυνση. Γι'αυτή την υπηρεσία θα επιβαρυνθείτε με διαχειριστικά έξοδα.

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