Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Coalition

A MANIFESTO FOR WARMTH

Putting an end to the cost and suffering of living in a cold damp home, and creating economic growth
The most recent Fuel Poverty Strategy is the 2011 Warmer Healthier Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland. The Strategy defined fuel poverty as:

“A household is in fuel poverty, if in order to maintain an acceptable level of temperature throughout the home the occupants would have to spend more than 10% of their income on all household fuel use.”

The three factors that cause fuel poverty are:

- Energy inefficient homes
- Low household income
- The price of energy

The Survey fieldwork was collected when home heating oil was at an all-time low with the average price for 500 litres hitting £125 in January 2016. However, the same amount of heating oil now costs on average 100% more. The Consumer Council provides an archive of average prices in Northern Ireland.

The latest house condition survey showed that in 2016, 22% of households in Northern Ireland were in fuel poverty.

Research shows the impacts of fuel poverty can damage quality of life and health as well as impose wider costs on the community, as the likelihood of ill health is increased by living in a cold home.

The Coalition was launched on the 1st November 2010 in response to the increasing serious levels of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland. The Coalition’s aim is to drive forward the fuel poverty agenda in Northern Ireland in terms of both policy and practical initiatives.

Currently the Coalition has a membership base of over 120 organisations from across Northern Ireland; representing businesses, environmental groups, trade unions, health sector, local councils, consumer groups, housing associations, rural support networks, the voluntary sector, student unions youth groups, older persons groups and faith groups.

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Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland

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The UN Sustainable Development Goals include Affordable and Clean Energy which is crucial to creating more sustainable and inclusive communities.
The last Fuel Poverty Strategy produced by the Department for Communities was in 2011. The 2016-2021 Northern Ireland Programme for Government committed to a revised Fuel Poverty Strategy, but since the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly this has not occurred.

Energy efficiency is a highly effective way to reduce energy bills as outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure installed</th>
<th>Annual Saving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loft insulation (without existing insulation)</td>
<td>£135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavity Wall Insulation</td>
<td>£155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot water cylinder jacket</td>
<td>£90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draught-proofing windows and doors</td>
<td>£25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-rated condensing boiler</td>
<td>Up to £350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Figures provided by Energy Saving Trust. Savings will vary depending on the size and thermal performance of your home. Figures are based on fuel prices as of October 2018.

Installing energy efficiency measures are within reach for fuel poor households and easier to achieve than increasing income or reducing energy prices. This also supports the economy through job creation within the energy industry and reduces costs for cold-related hospital admissions and energy imports.

Research in Northern Ireland on Whole House Solutions also shows when delivered have the biggest impact on energy saving.

An overwhelming 93% majority of MLAs surveyed in 2015 believed that energy efficiency should be an infrastructure priority in the programme for government.

The most recent Party Manifestos show political support for fuel poverty initiatives with a resounding support for the fuel poverty statutory scheme to be continually funded by the Department for Communities.

At local government level all 11 Councils have specified energy efficiency and/or fuel poverty within their Community Planning Strategies.

Esteemed researchers have produced numerous work showing the benefits of energy efficiency.

• Over 160,000 households in Northern Ireland live in fuel poverty;
• 43,800 households spend 15%+ of their income to meet required fuel expenditure;
• 1,500 excess winter deaths were recorded in 2017-18 across Northern Ireland with 30% directly attributable to living in a cold home;
• 68% of households are still reliant on home heating oil; an unregulated fuel in terms of price and vulnerable consumer protection;
• For every person who dies during the colder months of the year, another eight people are estimated to require treatment in hospital for an illness related to cold weather;
• Respiratory admission rate in the most deprived areas double the rate in the least deprived;
• According to the ONS Family Expenditure Survey – households in Northern Ireland are spending 11.5% more on electricity and 20% more on heating than the UK Average.
The Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Coalition's FIVE KEY PRIORITIES for Action

- Make energy efficiency an infrastructure priority to resource a well targeted energy efficiency programme, based on a Whole House Solution, to firstly significantly reduce and then eliminate fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

- Ensure that current and future schemes are effectively targeted at those who need the most support particularly in the private rented sector to reduce their heating costs, and continue to operate Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) until a suitable alternative is in place.

- Establish both a new Fuel Poverty Strategy, and Strategic Energy Framework ensuring that our energy policy delivers an affordable, secure and sustainable energy system for all households in Northern Ireland.

- Save lives by implementing the NICE NG6 guidelines on tackling winter deaths.

- Regulate the oil industry both in price and protection of vulnerable customers ensuring that consumers have the same safeguards that natural gas and electricity consumers currently have.

We call on our 2019 Local Election Candidates to pledge their commitment to embed our five key priorities into Council business and End Fuel Poverty for all in Northern Ireland.

The Consequences of NOT Addressing Fuel Poverty are Significant:

- More pressures on health and social care services;
- Shocking number of cold related deaths every winter;
- Stress and mental ill health through struggling with fuel debt and being unable to keep warm at home;
- Social exclusion and isolation arise from living in a cold damp house; and
- Setbacks to children's education when they have no warm space at home for homework or study.
What difference could this make in your constituency?

The recognised benefits of acting to end fuel poverty in your local area are:

1. Reductions in bills and energy arrears can increase spending within poor communities and local economies;
2. Better living conditions and significant positive impacts on health;
3. Increased internal temperatures will lead to fewer premature winter deaths;
4. Reductions in bills can lead to less stress and better mental health for occupants;
5. Less damp and mould growth within homes reduces respiratory problems; and
6. Local employment from a more buoyant energy efficiency will create more demand for local low and medium-skilled labour.

Conclusion and Next Steps . . .

Please make this a warmer, brighter future for thousands of voters and respond to our Manifesto for Warmth by committing within your own manifestos, to an additional, long term investment to radically improve the energy efficiency for fuel poor homes and end the suffering caused by fuel poverty within 10 years.

Sign up to the Fuel Poverty Coalition: fuelpovertyni.org
References


iii. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/energy

iv. Based on a typical three-bedroom semi-detached oil heated house October 2018 – Figures provided by Energy Saving Trust.


