



Consultation: Fuel Poverty Strategy for England

UK100 Submission

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Introduction

This submission is from UK100, which is the only network of 117 ambitious local authorities led by all political parties working together to tackle climate change. We help councils overcome challenges and turn innovation into solutions that work everywhere. We build the case for the powers needed to make change happen. From cities to villages, we help communities across the UK create thriving places powered by clean energy — with fresh air to breathe, warm homes to live in, and a healthy natural environment.

Executive Summary

Our submission focuses on the following key concerns that we consider crucial for achieving the objectives:

- 1. Empower local authorities:** Local authorities play a critical role in identifying and supporting fuel-poor households. To improve targeting and effectiveness, they need enhanced funding, capacity building, and access to data. Strengthening their role will enable more tailored, place-based solutions that address the specific needs of vulnerable communities and make best use of the data and insights held by local authorities.
- 2. Smart technology and vulnerable households:** Ensuring that vulnerable households have equal access to smart technologies is key to enabling them to benefit from flexible energy tariffs. The government must design accessible, user-friendly solutions that accommodate the needs of those with financial, mobility, digital, language or health challenges, ensuring they are not disadvantaged in the energy market.
- 3. Co-benefits of climate action:** Energy efficiency measures and low-carbon technologies offer multiple benefits beyond reducing energy consumption, including improved health outcomes and financial savings for fuel-poor households. The government should provide grants and non-competitive, place based funding to local authorities to implement retrofit programmes and incentivise energy suppliers

to offer rebates or discounts for households that invest in energy-saving technologies, contributing to both environmental and social-economic goals.

- 4. Joined-up policy design:** A holistic approach to fuel poverty requires collaboration across multiple government departments. Policy design should integrate energy, health, housing, and social services to ensure that support for fuel-poor households is coordinated and effective. It is not just about the fuel poverty strategy but also the Warm Homes Plan, retrofit grant design, a national energy advice framework for England, EPCs and Future Homes Standard that are all inter-linked.
- 5. Improved advice and access for vulnerable groups:** Quality advice services are essential to empowering fuel-poor households to navigate the energy market. Advice platforms, with both digital and in-person support options, should be developed, grounded in the communities they serve. Training for professionals in the health, social care, and housing sectors will help identify those at risk of fuel poverty and provide timely, tailored assistance.

In our submission we answer the following questions:

Q1. Should the 2030 fuel poverty target be retained? Please explain your reasoning.

Yes

The 2030 fuel poverty target should be retained, but with some refinements to enhance its effectiveness in addressing both fuel poverty and the broader net zero agenda. The average fuel poverty gap increased by 20% from £348 in 2022 to £417 in 2023¹. UK-wide energy debt is now almost £4 billion according to Citizens Advice². These figures highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions that support vulnerable households, and align fuel poverty strategies with the transition to net zero, energy security and the Government's Clean Energy Mission.

- **Urgency of action:** The 2030 target provides a clear and compelling deadline for action, which is vital to focus efforts and resources. Fuel poverty is a significant challenge for vulnerable households, and the continued high levels of fuel poverty require urgent intervention.
- **Alignment with net zero goals:** Retaining the target ensures that fuel poverty interventions remain aligned with the country's decarbonisation and energy efficiency objectives. There needs to be an integrated approach that addresses fuel poverty in parallel with achieving net zero emissions.

¹[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ccecba1d939500129466a9/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2024.pdf#:~:text=The%20average%20fuel%20poverty%20gap%20for%20England.by%2020%20per%20cent%20since%202022%20\(%2%A3348\).&text=The%20average%20fuel%20poverty%20gap%20has%20increased,to%20%C2%A3417%20in%20real%20terms%20since%20202011%20C12.](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ccecba1d939500129466a9/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2024.pdf#:~:text=The%20average%20fuel%20poverty%20gap%20for%20England.by%2020%20per%20cent%20since%202022%20(%2%A3348).&text=The%20average%20fuel%20poverty%20gap%20has%20increased,to%20%C2%A3417%20in%20real%20terms%20since%20202011%20C12.)

²<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/energy-network-companies-pocket-gbp4-billion-in-excess-profits-from-cost-of/>

- **Consistency:** A retained target gives certainty to local authorities, business, the supply chain, and stakeholders, enabling them to plan and implement effective, long-term interventions. Sudden changes to the timeline could disrupt ongoing efforts and undermine confidence in the policy framework.
- **Associated co-benefits:** Retaining the 2030 fuel poverty target will not only reduce energy costs for vulnerable households but also deliver significant co-benefits. Improved energy efficiency can lead to better health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, by reducing cold-related illnesses. It also supports environmental goals by reducing carbon emissions through lower energy demand. Additionally, energy efficiency measures can increase household disposable income, fostering economic resilience, energy security and stimulating local economies through investment in retrofits. These combined benefits make the 2030 target essential for achieving broader societal goals.

Q2. What are your views on an alternative fuel poverty target objective and what this objective should be?

An alternative fuel poverty target objective should focus not only on improving energy efficiency, but also on ensuring affordability for vulnerable households. Providing temporary but essential bill support to low-income households can help bridge the gap, particularly during periods of energy crisis. In the long term, a social tariff could protect the most vulnerable customers, ensuring they are not burdened by the upfront capital costs associated with transitioning to new technologies. Additionally, introducing a progressive unit pricing structure could further reduce energy costs for those in fuel poverty by charging higher rates for larger consumption and providing discounts for low consumption, thereby supporting affordability while promoting energy efficiency.

Setting specific sub-targets to address different groups, such as those in severe fuel poverty and moderately fuel-poor households would allow for more tailored interventions that reflect the varying levels of support needed.. The new objective could also focus on reducing fuel poverty in parallel with energy efficiency improvements and decarbonisation goals, ensuring that vulnerable households benefit from green upgrades and not just energy savings.

Q3. What are your views on the objective date? We welcome views on the target date for the current 2030 objective and a date for any alternative objective which could replace or succeed the 2030 target.

As we say above, we don't believe there should be a change to the 2030 target.

Q4. What are your views on:

A) retaining the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency metric as a measure of structural fuel poverty and as the official measure of progress to the statutory fuel poverty target in England?

B) whether to adopt an additional indicator to monitor the impact of energy prices on the affordability of energy?

C) the form of an energy affordability indicator, including whether this should include an income constraint and considerations on the basis on which to determine unaffordable energy requirements?

Please provide any supporting evidence.

Retaining the LILEE Metric but including additional indicators:

- **Value in identifying the most at-risk households:** The LILEE metric remains a useful tool for pinpointing households that face significant barriers to energy efficiency improvements, as it highlights areas of high vulnerability.
- **Need for additional indicators:** However, it should be complemented by other metrics that consider affordability. While the LILEE metric captures low-income households with poor energy efficiency, it does not capture moderate fuel poverty groups who may not fall within this classification but still face high energy bills relative to their income.
- **Tracking financial burden:** Energy price fluctuations disproportionately affect vulnerable households. An energy affordability indicator is crucial for understanding the real financial strain on households due to escalating energy prices. This indicator would consider both income and the actual cost of energy in relation to household spending. This measure would help policymakers better understand fuel poverty in a broader sense, encompassing households that struggle with energy costs despite potentially having an average or higher income and account for fluctuating energy costs.
- **Income constraint:** Including an income constraint would help capture households that are struggling to pay their energy bills even if their energy efficiency is relatively high. This group is often overlooked under current frameworks.

Reforming the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) System:

- **Current limitations of EPC:** The EPC system often fails to assess the real thermal efficiency of buildings, particularly in the private rental sector. This is due to its focus on the presence of features rather than the actual performance of the building in terms of heat retention. We provided a more detailed assessment of the failures of the current EPC system, in [our recent response](#) to the Government's EPC consultation.
- **Emphasis on fabric performance:** The fabric of a building—its ability to retain heat—should be a central component of any reformed EPC. This would provide a clearer and more accurate measure of a building's energy performance, addressing

the real-world energy needs of the home rather than just compliance with minimum standards. For the 2.7 million privately rented homes rated D or below, improving the EPC system to reflect actual thermal efficiency could significantly reduce heating costs and mitigate fuel poverty for these households.

- **Energy usage threshold:** Define unaffordable energy by considering the amount of energy required for basic living (heating, hot water, lighting) and ensuring that households spend no more than a reasonable proportion of their income on energy.

Q5. What are your views on adapting or implementing the Worst First principle, in order to maximise the number of fuel poor homes brought to Band C while ensuring that the worst homes are not left behind? Please provide any supporting evidence.

- **Focus on the most vulnerable first:** Implementing the 'Worst First' principle is crucial for ensuring that the most energy-inefficient homes, particularly those in the worst condition and occupied by fuel-poor households, receive priority support. This approach targets properties that are not only inefficient but also contribute most significantly to energy poverty, improving both comfort and affordability for the most vulnerable.
- **Reforming EPCs:** A key challenge is the limitations of the current Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) system, which does not always reflect the true thermal efficiency of homes, especially those with complex issues like poor insulation or outdated heating systems. EPCs often fail to capture the real performance of the building fabric, leading to potentially misleading ratings. To address this, retrofitting strategies should go beyond the EPC's superficial assessments and focus on improving the building's fabric, insulation, and overall heat retention capacity. This ensures a more holistic approach that actually addresses fuel poverty rather than just ticking boxes for regulatory compliance.
- **Balancing energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness:** While targeting the worst homes is important, it is equally essential to ensure that resources are used effectively. Retrofit solutions should be designed to maximise long-term savings and energy efficiency improvements, as well as providing immediate relief to fuel-poor households. Prioritising the most inefficient homes for retrofit should be accompanied by strategies to ensure that improvements are sustainable, and that these homes are brought up to an adequate energy standard, not just the minimum.
- **Equity in implementation:** Careful monitoring is needed to ensure that while the worst homes are prioritised, no homes are left behind. This requires clear guidance on what defines the "worst" properties and ensuring that interventions are equitable, targeting those most in need but also expanding support to a broader base of vulnerable households over time. This also requires investment in local capacity to handle the scale of retrofitting efforts and to address the long-term nature of improvements.

- **Person-centric approach:** It is important to ensure the needs of the individuals and families living in these homes is at the forefront of the strategy. This includes providing adequate support, clear information, and accessible guidance throughout the retrofit process. Vulnerable households, including those with disabilities, elderly residents, or people facing other challenges, should receive tailored support to ensure they can fully benefit from improvements. The approach should ensure that residents and communities are not only included in the decision-making but also supported in overcoming any barriers to engaging with the retrofit process.
- **Community-led approach:** By applying ‘Worst First’ to entire streets or neighbourhoods, this can create efficiencies by allowing local contractors and suppliers to focus on a specific area, reducing costs and improving the speed of implementation. This is particularly important in fuel-poor communities that also face other social difficulties.

Q6. What are your views on how we could better define or implement the cost effectiveness principle? Please provide any supporting evidence.

The cost-effectiveness principle should be defined with a focus on maximising both social and environmental outcomes while ensuring that interventions are financially viable for both the government and households.

- **Holistic assessment of co-benefits:** Cost-effectiveness should not only account for energy savings but also consider health improvements, improved quality of life, and increased household productivity. For example, making homes warmer can reduce illness-related absences from work or school, contributing to broader economic and social benefits. These additional benefits should be quantified in cost-effectiveness assessments.
- **Long-term savings:** Energy efficiency measures should be assessed based on lifetime savings rather than just short-term paybacks. For instance, upgrading insulation or replacing heating systems might have higher upfront costs but result in substantial long-term savings, reduced reliance on emergency heating, and better resilience to future energy price increases.
- **Least cost is not always cost-effective:** The principle of cost-effectiveness should go beyond simply opting for the lowest upfront cost. For example, cheap retrofitting may require additional rounds of work or maintenance, leading to escalating costs over time. Therefore, it’s crucial to include monitoring and quality assurance measures to ensure that low-cost interventions do not result in inefficiencies or recurrent costs. By focusing on durable, high-quality solutions that reduce future expenditure and improve energy performance in the long term, the approach to cost-effectiveness can achieve both immediate and sustained benefits for fuel-poor households.

- **Fairness:** Cost-effectiveness should prioritise reducing inequality. Policies must ensure that low-income households receive quality, long-term solutions, not just short-term, cost-saving measures, to prevent widening socioeconomic divides.

Q7. What are your views on how we could better define or implement the vulnerability principle? Please provide any supporting evidence.

Responses could include views on:

- **How to better incorporate consideration of health inequalities and vulnerabilities into fuel poverty policies**
 - **How to better target fuel poor households who are vulnerable**
 - **How to better track the rates and impacts of fuel poverty on households with specific vulnerabilities**
- **Identify key vulnerabilities:** A clearer definition of vulnerability would include factors like health conditions, disability, age, and living in poor housing. A vulnerability indicator could be integrated into data collection efforts to better identify those at the highest risk of harm from fuel poverty. The integration of health sector data could better align fuel poverty interventions with health policy.
 - **Tracking impacts on vulnerable groups:** To better track the impact of fuel poverty on specific vulnerable groups, detailed data on health outcomes, mortality rates, and social exclusion should be regularly collected. A vulnerability index could also help policymakers target interventions more precisely.
 - **Flexible targeting:** Vulnerability considerations should not just be based on income, but also on the interconnected vulnerabilities a household faces. For example, households with elderly members may be more vulnerable to cold temperatures, so a heat and health policy could be a useful framework to better address their needs.

Q8. What are your views on how we could better define or implement the sustainability principle? Please provide any supporting evidence.

Responses could include views on:

- **How the transition to net zero can be best implemented for fuel poor households**
 - **The role of 'fabric first' in alleviating fuel poverty**
 - **The role of fossil fuels within government schemes addressing fuel poverty**
 - **How smart technologies, including batteries and solar, could be used to support fuel poor homes**
 - **How home retrofit can support climate change adaptation**
- **Net-zero transition for fuel-poor households:** Fuel poverty policies should prioritise energy efficiency and low-carbon heating systems (e.g., heat pumps, solar panels) for low-income households. These measures will reduce households' reliance on fossil

fuels, their vulnerability to price shocks associated with fossil fuels, and help achieve both fuel poverty and net-zero targets.

- **Fabric-first approach:** Homes should be made more energy-efficient through insulation and airtightness before introducing renewable energy sources. This strategy ensures that homes are energy-efficient in the long term, reducing the overall need for energy, and preparing them for future decarbonisation efforts.
- **Role of fossil fuels:** The role of fossil fuels should be limited, and their use in government schemes should be phased out as soon as feasible. If fossil fuels are used, it should only be in cases where no feasible low-carbon alternatives are available and after extensive energy efficiency improvements.
- **Smart technologies:** Smart technologies (e.g., smart meters, heating controls, energy management systems) should be incorporated into fuel poverty strategies. These tools can optimise energy use, reduce waste, and help vulnerable households better manage their energy consumption. However, equitable access to these technologies should be prioritised to avoid creating digital exclusion.
- **Climate adaptation:** Home retrofit should not only aim to improve energy efficiency but also support climate change adaptation by ensuring that homes are resilient to extreme weather (e.g., heatwaves and flooding). For example, improving home insulation or adding shading could help reduce both winter heating and summer cooling costs, making homes more adaptable to changing weather patterns.

Q9. Are there any additional principles that you think should be considered for inclusion in the new strategy?

In addition to the existing principles, the following could be considered for inclusion:

- **Equity:** A clear focus on equitable access to energy efficiency upgrades for all households, particularly those in vulnerable or hard-to-reach groups. The strategy should ensure that no one is left behind due to geographic, financial, or social barriers.
- **Joined-up policy:** It is crucial that the strategy integrates interconnected policies, ensuring alignment across energy, housing, health, and social care sectors. A coordinated approach can enhance the effectiveness of fuel poverty interventions, ensure efficient use of resources, and address the broader socio-economic factors that contribute to fuel poverty.
- **Comprehensive policy integration:** Fuel poverty should be established as a core consideration in all relevant energy market, regulatory, and policy reforms, extending beyond just home heating or efficiency. This would ensure that energy affordability, accessibility, and support for low-income households are embedded across the energy sector, driving systemic change to reduce fuel poverty in all areas of policy and practice.
- **Collaboration:** A principle that emphasises the need for collaboration between government, local authorities, energy companies, and community organisations. Working together can ensure that fuel poverty interventions are more integrated and

tailored to local conditions.

Q10. What are your views on the factors set out above which will determine what is 'reasonably practicable' in relation to meeting the fuel poverty target? Are there any additional factors that should be considered in analysis of the number of homes that can achieve the target level by the target date? Please provide any supporting evidence.

There should be a clear target set for fuel poverty, as this provides a measurable goal to work towards for national, regional and local government. Once a target is established, appropriate measures and interventions can be identified and implemented to achieve it. This would also allow for tracking progress and adjusting strategies as necessary to ensure success by the target date.

Q11. What are your priority recommendations for an updated plan to improve the energy performance of fuel poor homes?

To improve the energy performance of fuel-poor homes, the updated plan should focus on comprehensive, long-term strategies that maximise energy efficiency and reduce household energy costs. Key recommendations include:

- **Integrating retrofit into existing housing programs:** Retrofitting should be gradually incorporated into other ongoing programs like basic repairs, fixing damp and mould, and cladding removal. Council housing departments and housing associations will need to understand their buildings, listen to their tenants and leaseholders, and work out what's necessary for their health and well-being.
- **Decarbonising homes and replacing gas heating systems:** Focusing on replacing gas heating systems with low-carbon alternatives, such as high-temperature heat pumps, can significantly reduce carbon emissions. However, for tenants to benefit from lower energy costs, electricity prices need to be decoupled from gas prices.
- **Targeting the most inefficient homes:** The government should focus on homes in the lowest energy efficiency bands (e.g., F and G-rated homes). These homes often have the highest energy costs and are most vulnerable to fuel poverty. Targeted funding should be directed towards these homes.
- **Collaboration with local authorities:** Local authorities should be central to implementing energy efficiency improvements, with a focus on local needs and the specific challenges in each region. This could involve partnerships with housing associations, landlords, and community organisations to deliver tailored solutions. However, challenges around monitoring and enforcement may arise, as there is often a lack of data and consistent tracking systems to ensure that improvements are made effectively. To address this, dedicated funding should be allocated to support

capacity building within local authorities, enabling them to better manage and oversee energy efficiency initiatives.

- **Incentivising innovation:** The plan should encourage the adoption of new technologies, such as heat pumps, solar panels, and smart energy systems. Supporting innovation through grants or subsidies can help lower costs for fuel-poor households while reducing carbon emissions.
- **Long-term funding commitment:** The government should commit to sustained funding for home energy efficiency measures, ensuring a non-competitive, multi-year approach to tackling fuel poverty that allows for long-term planning and impact. A stable and predictable funding landscape will also help build markets, strengthen supply chains, and support workforce development, ensuring the capacity to deliver energy efficiency upgrades at scale.

Q12. What are your priority recommendations for the design of energy bill support for fuel poor households?

Responses could include views on:

- **who should receive support**
- **what form that support should take**
- **any additional policies which would contribute to the updated fuel poverty strategy to support fuel poor households with the cost of energy**

The design of energy bill support should be targeted, equitable, and flexible to ensure it reaches the households most in need. Priority recommendations include:

- **Eligibility criteria:** Support should be targeted at households that are both low-income and energy inefficient. The criteria could be based on a combination of income, energy efficiency of the home, and household size. Vulnerable groups (e.g., elderly people, children, individuals with disabilities) should be prioritised within the criteria.
- **Direct financial support:** Energy bill support could take the form of direct financial assistance, either through rebates or credits, to help offset energy costs. This approach ensures that the support is flexible and directly addresses the household's immediate energy needs. The energy support schemes should be regularly reviewed to ensure they are aligned with current energy prices and inflation rates. This helps to maintain the effectiveness of the support over time.
- **Incentives for low-carbon heating:** Support should incentivise the transition to low-carbon heating systems (e.g., heat pumps, district heating). This could take the form of grants, tax credits, or low-interest loans to help households afford the upfront costs. This will help save costs in the long run and protect households from fossil fuel-related price shocks, providing more stability.
- **Energy management tools:** Support should include access to energy management tools such as smart meters and energy usage monitoring to help households better understand their energy consumption and reduce unnecessary costs. However, a

no-detriment policy should be implemented to ensure that no one in fuel poverty is left behind or pays more for energy due to new technologies or services. The introduction of smart technologies and energy management tools should not result in increased costs for fuel-poor households. This ensures that vulnerable households can benefit from new technologies without facing additional financial strain.

- **Support for local authorities:** They are best positioned to understand the unique needs and challenges of their regions and can implement energy management schemes tailored to those needs. However, local authorities need flexibility in how they design and implement these schemes, as well as long-term sustained funding and capacity-building support to ensure their success. This will help ensure that interventions are adaptable and effective in addressing local conditions and that local authorities can sustain their efforts in the long term.
- **Joined-up policy making:** To effectively address fuel poverty and energy efficiency, there needs to be joined-up policy making across government departments. This ensures that policies related to energy efficiency, fuel poverty alleviation, and net-zero targets are aligned and mutually reinforcing. This will ensure that interventions are cohesive and that resources are allocated effectively. A coordinated approach would help integrate fuel poverty strategies with broader housing, health, and climate policies, leading to more holistic solutions.

Q13. What do you think are the priorities for government to support fuel poor households in accessing the energy market fairly and effectively?

The priorities should include:

- **Price regulation:** The government should ensure that energy tariffs are fair and transparent, preventing energy companies from charging disproportionately high prices to vulnerable households. This could include expanding price caps for vulnerable households and enforcing fair pricing in the market.
- **Access to Smart Technology for vulnerable households:** Vulnerable households often face barriers in accessing smart technologies that could help them benefit from flexible energy pricing and better demand management. These households may not be able to shift their energy usage to take advantage of lower prices during off-peak times due to mobility issues, health conditions, or other factors. As a result, they miss out on potential savings and the overall benefits of flexible energy tariffs. To address this, solutions need to be designed with vulnerable groups in mind, ensuring that smart technologies are accessible, automated if possible, user-friendly, and tailored to their specific needs. Additionally, pricing structures should ensure that these households are not disadvantaged by their inability to access cheaper off-peak prices, guaranteeing they are not worse off due to limitations in flexibility.
- **Default or social tariffs should allow for more flexibility,** enabling consumers to save by shifting their energy demand during off-peak hours.

- **Trust in smart meters and energy suppliers must be strengthened**, with clear consumer protections to ensure transparency and fair treatment.
- **Better information and advice:** Government support could include advice services that help fuel-poor households navigate the energy market, understand tariff options, and switch suppliers. This support could take the form of dedicated helplines or online tools.
- **Support for energy efficiency in the market:** The government could incentivise energy suppliers to offer discounts or rebates for households that install energy efficiency measures or adopt low-carbon technologies. This would help reduce overall energy consumption and bring down bills for fuel-poor households.
- **Increased competition and choice:** Fuel-poor households should have access to a wide range of affordable energy suppliers. The government should support policies that increase competition in the energy market and allow households to easily switch suppliers for better deals.

Q14. What are your views on how to improve targeting of fuel poor households? Please provide any supporting evidence.

Responses could include views on:

- **Alternative ways to set criteria to verify the eligibility of fuel poor households**
- **Views on tools that can support better targeting of fuel poor households**
- **How to improve the targeting of support for children and people with health conditions**
- **The role of referrals to help reach vulnerable households**
- **How to target support schemes to hard to reach, or treat, properties.**

To improve the targeting of fuel-poor households, a combination of data-driven approaches and direct engagement with local communities is essential. Recommendations include:

- **Refining eligibility criteria:** Current criteria for determining fuel poverty often rely heavily on income and energy efficiency alone. To better target households, a more nuanced approach could incorporate additional factors, such as health status, number of children in the household, and energy vulnerability etc. Specialised support should be targeted to these households to ensure they are adequately supported.
- **Support for local authorities in targeting fuel poor households:** Local authorities play a critical role in identifying and targeting fuel-poor households. They need adequate support, including funding and capacity-building, to improve data collection, target interventions effectively, and reach vulnerable groups. Collaboration with local agencies, housing providers, and community organisations will help ensure that support is tailored to specific regional needs.
- **Referrals and outreach:** Referral systems can help ensure that fuel-poor households are connected to support programs. Healthcare professionals, social workers, and housing officers could be trained to refer households to relevant schemes, ensuring that hard-to-reach groups benefit from available support.

- **Use of digital tools:** The government could develop or expand digital platforms that enable households to self-assess their fuel poverty status and apply for assistance. This could include online eligibility checks or partnerships with energy suppliers to offer targeted assistance to households that meet specific criteria.

Q15. What else could improve partnership and learning to support the fuel poor?

Improving partnership and learning to support fuel-poor households requires fostering collaboration and a continuous learning environment among key stakeholders. Suggestions include:

- **Local authority leadership:** Local authorities should be integral to the process, given their on-the-ground knowledge, ability to coordinate across sectors, and direct engagement with vulnerable households. Strengthening their role in partnership initiatives, funding programs, and policy design will ensure more effective, place-based solutions to tackle fuel poverty.
- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Partnerships between local authorities, energy companies, charities, and community organisations are essential for tackling fuel poverty effectively. These organisations should share resources, knowledge, and data to identify and support vulnerable households.
- **Local empowerment:** Local communities should be empowered to play an active role in designing and implementing solutions. Community-led initiatives (e.g., energy cooperatives, local energy advice services) can provide more tailored and effective support for fuel-poor households.
- **Engagement with charities, local third sector, and consumer groups:** These are crucial partners for providing reputable advice and support to fuel-poor households.
- **Access to trusted and impartial information:** Ensuring that consumers have access to trusted, impartial information, including through digital services and dedicated phone lines, is vital for informed decision-making and effective support.
- **Simplifying the user journey for retrofit access:** Streamlining the process for consumers, landlords, and tenants by creating a single access point for all retrofit-related services can simplify navigation and improve participation in energy efficiency programs

Q16. How could access to quality advice be improved to support the fuel poor? Where should advice be targeted?

AND

Q17. How could vulnerable households be supported to access advice? Is there a role for the health and social care workforce or other professional groups supporting vulnerable households?

Q18. How else can government improve understanding of fuel poverty and its impacts?

Responses could include views on:

- Any evidence gaps which need to be filled to improve our collective understanding of fuel poverty and its impacts
- Examples of best practice which could improve our understanding of fuel poverty

Improving access to quality advice for fuel-poor households requires a multi-channel approach and targeted outreach to ensure the right support reaches those who need it most.

Recommendations include:

- **Centralised advice services:** Establish dedicated energy advice helplines or online portals where fuel-poor households can receive personalised advice on reducing energy bills, improving home energy efficiency, and accessing financial support schemes. There is still no unified approach for England, unlike the position in Wales and Scotland, and we have been working with Energy Saving Trust and others to advocate for this to change..
- **Role of local authorities:** Local authorities are well-placed to take a leading role in designing and delivering support tailored to their regions, as they have a deep understanding of local needs and existing vulnerabilities. We have seen evidence of this work across our network and with the right resources, funding, and capacity-building support, they can effectively coordinate advice services, integrate fuel poverty considerations into health and social care pathways, and ensure that vulnerable households receive targeted assistance. Strengthening their role will also improve data collection and evidence-sharing, helping to fill knowledge gaps and enhance the national understanding of fuel poverty and its impacts.
- **Targeted outreach:** Advice should be targeted at vulnerable households, including those with low incomes, disabilities, elderly people, and families with young children. Local authorities and community organisations can be instrumental in identifying these groups and providing tailored advice.
- **In-person support:** While digital tools are valuable, face-to-face support should also be available for households with limited digital literacy or access. This can be provided through local government offices, community centers, or energy efficiency advisors visiting homes directly. But they need to be resourced to be able to implement this effectively, and that there is a clear framework and funding for local and national energy advice in England.
- **Language and accessibility:** Advice should be available in multiple languages and accessible formats, ensuring that households with different cultural backgrounds or those with disabilities can access support.

- **Proactive engagement:** Advice should not only be reactive (i.e., when households ask for help) but also proactively offered to households identified as being at risk of fuel poverty, such as through automated referrals from energy companies or local authorities.
- **The role of trusted intermediaries:** Establish and adequately resource trusted intermediaries, such as community energy groups, fuel poverty charities, and local health and social organisations, to deliver reliable and impartial advice to fuel-poor households. These intermediaries should be easily accessible and well-positioned to engage with the communities that need support the most.
- **Systematically enable collaboration between key sectors:** Foster greater collaboration between local government, the NHS, energy advice services, and retrofit organisations. A model like Staffordshire Community Energy, which integrates health, energy, and retrofit services, could be expanded to improve the accessibility of comprehensive advice and support for households in fuel poverty. This can also be linked with initiatives such as the Local Power Plan to drive holistic support for vulnerable communities.
- **Accelerate PSR, data sharing, and cross-sectoral governance:** Accelerate the implementation of the Priority Services Register (PSR) and improve data-sharing protocols between sectors. A more coordinated approach to governance and policy design would allow for more streamlined delivery of fuel poverty support services, ensuring that households receive timely and relevant advice across energy, health, and housing sectors.
- **Training for professionals:** The health and social care workforce should receive training to recognise signs of fuel poverty and the health impacts associated with it. They can then help households access the right energy advice and support services.
- **Health-based support schemes:** For households with chronic health conditions, specialised advice should be provided that connects them with schemes specifically designed to improve energy efficiency in homes that support their health needs (e.g., warmth for health initiatives, or thermal comfort programs for people with respiratory conditions).

We would be grateful if, in addition to considering UK100's response to the consultation, you would also explore opportunities for further engagement. Please get in touch if you would like to know more or explore our response in more detail. We would also be happy to give evidence, convene a discussion with our member local authorities, to discuss the themes within this inquiry and our response further.