

Measures to assist fuel-poor households in the UK

The UK Government has announced four steps to help low-income families deal with high energy bills, including increasing obligations on energy companies to help the most vulnerable and plans to set a “Super” Priority Group obligation for the most vulnerable. Up to 90,000 homes in England, Scotland and Wales will receive assistance with whole-house energy makeovers to save low-income families around £300 per year on energy bills. The government says that social tariffs offered by the energy companies are vital for those who face real hardship. “We plan to put voluntary social tariffs on a statutory footing,” says the Department of Energy and Climate Change. The government plans to give energy regulator Ofgem new powers to police abuses in the market. “We recognise there is still a mountain to climb on fuel poverty because of significant increases in fuel bills and that’s why we’re determined to redouble our efforts,” says UK Energy and Climate Change Parliamentary Under Secretary of State David Kidney. “We plan to legislate to give new powers to the regulator to take action, make social tariffs mandatory not optional, and are planning new measures on energy efficiency targeted at the poorest.” Meanwhile, the latest Annual Report on UK’s Fuel Poverty Statistics 2009 has been published by the Department of Energy and Climate Change. In 2007, there were around four million fuel-poor households in the UK, an increase from 3.5 million in 2006. In England, there were around 2.8 million fuel-poor households, up from 2.4 million in 2006. The report says the increase in fuel poverty between 2006 and 2007 was caused by rising fuel prices, although rising incomes and improvements in the energy efficiency of housing have continued to help households in not falling into fuel poverty and in some cases have removed fuel-poor households from fuel poverty. Fuel poverty figures for 2008 and 2009 will only be known when once detailed results of the surveys on household income and efficiency programs are received, and will be available for publication in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

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