

Fuel Poverty Prompts UK Measures

The UK Government has announced new measures to combat fuel poverty. Numbers in fuel poverty – measured in millions – are surging as record oil prices push gas prices up to record levels. The average UK household gas bill could soon reach £1000 per year, recent UK newspaper reports have warned. The Government says it will seek changes in the law to allow data-sharing with energy suppliers. That would mean the Government could use its data on vulnerable households to help energy suppliers target their low cost tariffs at the most vulnerable customers. The Department for Work and Pensions will look to introduce a measure to the Pensions Bill now in Parliament. The Government says there will be a pilot scheme to ensure people applying for grants under the Warm Front scheme – which helps insulate homes – are also referred to their energy supplier for tariff advice. “We’ve got a commitment from the energy companies ... now we’re working on finding ways to get them the right information to enable them to get that money to those who need it the most,” says Energy Minister Malcolm Wicks says. The latest measures announced give further details on suggestions that were announced after a major fuel poverty summit hosted by energy regulator Ofgem in April 2008. Fuel poverty is defined as spending more than 10 per cent of net householder income on energy.

[Source essa news]