Fuel Poverty in Westminster

A summary of available advice and assistance November 2013
A person is to be regarded as living “in fuel poverty” if he is a member of a household living on a lower income in a home which cannot be kept warm at reasonable cost.

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy published in 2001 sets the target of eradicating fuel poverty as far as reasonably practicable by 2016.
Fuel Poverty in Westminster

In Westminster 7,804 households (8.3%) were in fuel poverty in 2011

Issues particular to Westminster

• High housing costs exacerbate the problem
• Old housing stock, large number of listed buildings and conservation areas make energy efficiency improvements more costly
• Pockets of high deprivation
• Engagement with vulnerable groups
• Private rented sector 3 times the national average

Issues affecting all in or at risk of fuel poverty

• Energy bills have risen by 37% in three years
  http://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/nov/16/energy-prices-rise
• Fuel poverty not static and relates to changes in circumstances; retirement; baby; loss of a partner or job.
Health Effects of Fuel Poverty

**Cardio-vascular disease**
- A rise in blood pressure during the cold increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

**Respiratory Illness**
- The cold lowers resistance to respiratory infections.
- Coldness impairs lung function and can trigger broncho-constriction in asthma and COPD.
- Dampness is associated with cold houses; damp increases mould growths which can cause asthma and respiratory infections.
- School sickness in children with asthma or recurrent respiratory infections

**Mobility, increased falls and non-intentional injuries**
- Symptoms of arthritis become worse in cold damp houses.
- Strength and dexterity decrease as temperatures drop, increasing the risk of non-intentional injuries.
- A cold house increases the risk of falls in the elderly

**Mental and social health**
- Damp, cold housing is associated with an increase in mental health problems.
- Some people become socially isolated as they are reluctant to invite friends round to a cold house.
- In cold homes where only one room is heated, it is difficult for children to do homework, affecting educational and long-term work and health opportunities.
Room Temperatures

Ideal room temperatures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living room</td>
<td>21°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>18°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathroom</td>
<td>22°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedrooms</td>
<td>18°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hall / Stairs</td>
<td>16°C</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(World Health Organisation statistics)

Following cold weather an increase in heart attacks, strokes and respiratory illness can be predicted after 2, 5 and 12 days respectively.

(Eurowinter Group, 1997)

In 2011/12 there were an estimated **24,000** excess winter deaths in England and Wales.

Above 18°C (64°F):
- No adverse health effects

Below 16°C (61°F):
- Risk of respiratory infections

Below 12°C (54°F):
- Increased blood pressure

Below 9°C (48°F):
- Deep body temperature falls

In 2011/12 there were an estimated **24,000** excess winter deaths in England and Wales.
Energy Efficiency Advice and Grants

Westminster Residential Environmental Health offer advice and/or signpost to the following:

- Energy efficiency advice
- Grant funded heating and insulation (private sector only)
- Grants to pay fuel debts (and other debts)
- Income maximisation
- Being added to the priority service register
- Advice on fuel supplier switching

Phone: 020 7641 6161
Web: [http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/environment/energy/grants](http://www.westminster.gov.uk/services/environment/energy/grants)

**Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC)**
DECC has produced an advice leaflet about saving energy in the home, the grants and assistance available for consumers:
Social Housing Properties
The repair and home improvement needs of social housing tenants should be addressed by their housing provider. However properties if the social housing provider has failed to take action cases can be referred to:

Environmental Health HHSRS Enforcement
Inspection of housing association (& privately rented) properties in poor condition.
PHONE: 020 7641 6161
RES@westminster.gov.uk
When Prevention is not Enough

Fuel debt grants are available from
- British Gas Energy Trust
- EDF Energy Trust
- NPower Energy Trust

Tel: 01733 421 021
E-mail: admin@charisgrants.com
Web: http://www.charisgrants.com/

Westminster Citizens Advice Bureau provides fuel debt advice.
Call: 08444 771 611
Citizens Advice Bureau

- Advice for residents:
  [http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/consumer_e/consumer_energy_and_water_supply_e.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/consumer_e/consumer_energy_and_water_supply_e.htm)
- Advice for advice providers:
  [http://www.consumerfutures.org.uk/information-for-advice-providers](http://www.consumerfutures.org.uk/information-for-advice-providers)

Paying less for your fuel

- Priority Service Register
- Fuel switching

Benefit Entitlement Checks

- Turn2us 0808 802 2000