



# Fixing Fuel Poverty

Challenges and Solutions



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## Delivering the benefits

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**Copenhagen**

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# More fuel poor

- Incomes decreasing in UK
- Fuel prices rising – everywhere
- Ageing populations
- 25% of UK households in 2013
- Climate change more serious
- Need huge emphasis on energy efficient homes



26 March 2013, England

# Deaths soar by 2,500 in cold snap as millions struggle to heat homes

**Nicholas Cecil**  
Deputy Political Editor

THE number of deaths has jumped by more than 2,500 in the bitterly cold weather this month compared with past years, figures reveal today.

They show hundreds more people dying in England as millions of pensioners and families struggle to heat their homes. In the week ending March 15, 11,180 deaths were registered – 1,300 more than the average for the past five years – and including 500 pensioners. There were 11,245

bills as energy companies make bumper profits. The figures also sparked calls for people to check on their elderly or vulnerable neighbours. Former health secretary Stephen Dorrell said: "It's a time when all of us should have heightened awareness about our neighbours' health and well-being."

Michelle Mitchell, charity director general at Age UK, said: "This prolonged cold snap will be taking its toll on many older people, both physically and mentally. It's crucial that people keep in touch with their older

eight-week period. An RAF Chinook helicopter was today called to help as part of an emergency operation to reach farms and families cut off by snow drifts in Northern Ireland.

It was taking fodder and provisions to the Glens of Antrim where thousands of livestock are feared to have died.

Economists have warned that the enduring cold snap could push Britain into a triple dip recession.

The economy contracted in the final quarter of last year but had been predicted by the independent Office for Budget Responsibility to narrow

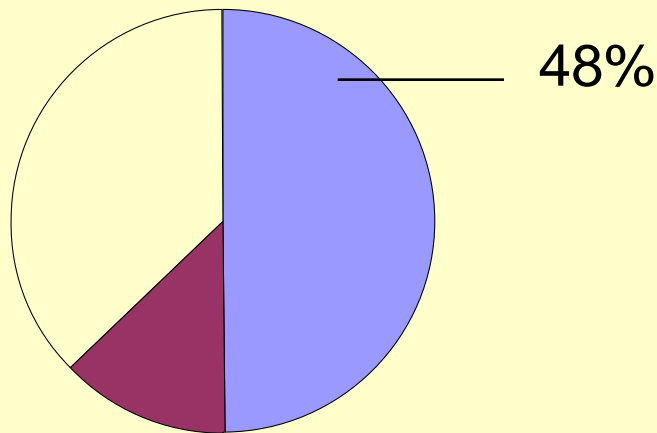
# Who are the vulnerable?

Vulnerable - in EU energy poverty definition

- Young
- Elderly
- Sick
- Disabled
- 72% of UK households contain a vulnerable person

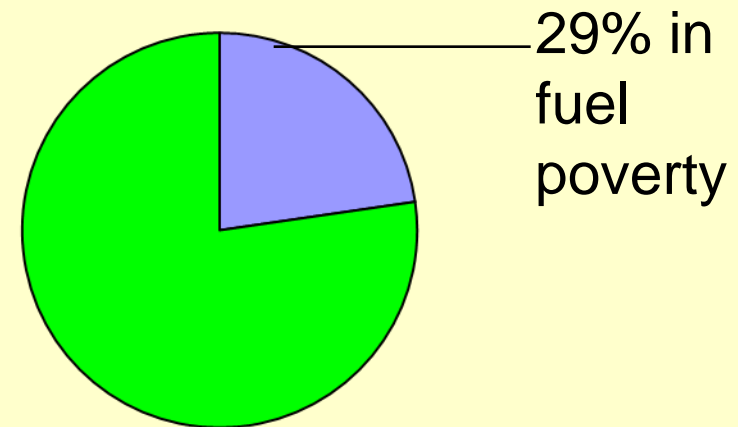
# Fuel poor pensioners England 2009

Fuel poor households



Over 60 with children others

Pensioner  
households



# Who is fuel poor?

- Depends on income definition
- Either pensioners OR families, probably not both
  - Treatment of rent and housing costs
  - Equivalising for the size of the household

# Identifying the fuel poor on the doorstep

- On a low income: can prove receipt of a state means-tested income benefit

AND

- Lives in an energy inefficient home (E, F, G) or an older property

# Individual (vs areas)

- High administrative costs of finding fuel poor
- Expensive to visit each property several times (if doing individual measures)
- Risk of household refusing because of stigma, fear of unknown, literacy, etc



# (Individual) vs area

- Area-based: economies of scale with energy efficiency measures
- Incorporates the reluctant householder
- Preventative approach – everyone is warmer and less likely to get ill
- Do for the environment, health, well-being, future generations, not poverty

# NHS initiatives

- Health and Wellbeing Boards
  - Each local authority
  - Brings housing and health together
- NICE – Excess winter deaths and morbidity and the health risks associated with cold homes
- Cold Weather Plan for England 2011

# *Cold weather plan* launch

- an increase in heart attacks and stroke - accounting for 40% of excess winter deaths
- pressure on GPs - GP visits for respiratory illnesses increase by up to 19% for every 1°C drop below 5°C of the mean temperature
- it is estimated that over £850 million is spent by the NHS each year as a result of the impact of cold housing on people's health

# Who pays?

- Substantial costs
- At no capital cost to the poor
- Cannot identify the fuel poor
- No need to subsidise the rich
- Through fuel prices / income tax / health?
- Release the equity in the building?
- Hypothecate carbon taxes for energy efficiency ?

# Resumé

- Fuel poor are difficult to find
- Need comprehensive policies on incomes, housing and health
- Area-based approach, all homes
- No cost to fuel poor
- Clear strategy with targets

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**Thank you**