

## **WHAT IS FUEL POVERTY?**

Fuel poverty refers to a household that cannot afford to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth and meet its other energy needs, in order to maintain health and wellbeing. Whether a household is in fuel poverty is determined by the interplay across three factors:

- the energy efficiency of the property
- energy costs
- household income.

**It is also influenced by factors such as:**

- heating-related health needs
- occupancy levels related to the size of property
- housing tenure
- access to mains gas

### **Those most at risk**

Those most vulnerable to fuel poverty and the impacts of cold, damp homes are:

- older people – particularly those living on their own and/or in larger family homes
- lone parents with dependent children
- families who are unemployed or on low incomes
- children and young people
- disabled people
- people with existing illnesses and long-term conditions (physical and mental)
- single unemployed people.

NHS and community sector organisations (Shelter) are key partners for energy advice projects to effectively address fuel poverty and cold homes

It is an important partnership because of the continued public health crisis associated with cold homes, rising numbers of households struggling to meet their energy bills, and the need for coordinated and systematic policy, planning and regulation to ensure that everyone has a warm and healthy home.

NHS professionals have daily contact with vulnerable people and are often the most trusted of isolated and older people.

Involving health professionals provides opportunities to target programmes to those most in need and most likely to benefit, but who are unlikely to apply on their own.

**What is needed?**

Local initiatives to develop effective and simple local solutions to fuel poverty. Protect vulnerable people so that they are not forced to live in miserable, cold, damp, houses that they cannot afford to heat adequately to protect their health.

PRESCRIPTION BAG INITIATIVE

GP SURGERIES

PARTNERSHIPS WITH FUEL COMPANIES

ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES

WARM HOME DISCOUNT

FUEL DEBT WRITE OFF

SIMPLE HEATING CONTROLS

MAXIMISING HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The growing body of evidence shows a close relationship linking cold homes, fuel poverty and poor health physical and mental of the young and old. There are significant health benefits from tackling fuel poverty in our cities.