

Government 'should support households struggling with energy bills' this winter

M

[Ps](#) have called on the [Government](#) to support under-pressure households ahead of an "inevitable" new energy crisis this winter.

The Energy Security and Net Zero Committee said that ministers must make sure that all families who did not feel the benefit of last year's £400 per household help get that money now.

MPs on the committee said that the Warm Home Discount, which cuts bills by £150 over winter for those eligible, should be extended, and that the Government should provide money ahead of cold spells.

Angus Brendan MacNeil, committee chair, said: "The nights are now drawing in and many of our most vulnerable people will be haunted by harrowing memories of the relentless sacrifices they were forced into last year, just to keep their heads above water in the face of exorbitant energy costs."

He added: "In fact, one in four carry energy debts from last winter. With the challenge this winter threatening to be even worse, an announcement of support from the Government is long overdue."

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While energy prices on the wholesale market have dropped significantly since last winter, in practice many households will be paying the same or even more this winter than they were a year earlier.

There are two main reasons for this. Primarily it is because the Government is no longer subsidising everyone's bills like it did last year.

The second reason is that while the per unit cost for gas and electricity is lower now than it was last year for customers on the price cap tariff, the standing charge has gone up.

That means that for those who use lower amounts of gas and electricity than the average, bills are likely to be higher this winter because they pay the same standing charge as everyone else.

The Government and energy firms must now get on and act to reassure struggling households that they are not being left to fend for themselves

The MPS also called for the abolition of these standing charges. They said that customers should pay for what they use.

Mr MacNeil said: "The mechanisms to provide assistance are already in place – the Government and energy firms must now get on and act to reassure struggling households that they are not being left to fend for themselves.

"The report noted the 'unfair and regressive standing charges' should go. After all you don't pay a standing charge to buy petrol, you just pay for what you use.

“We also saw the wisdom in the need for a social tariff for those hardest hit and anyone with a modicum of empathy can see why.”

A Department for Energy Security and Net Zero spokesperson said: “The Energy Price Guarantee will remain in place to protect people until April next year – part of nearly £40 billion of support to cover around half a typical household bill.

“This winter, additional targeted support is available to those most in need through our Warm Home Discount – with 3 million of the most vulnerable households expected to benefit – and we recently launched our £1 billion Great [British](#) Insulation Scheme to help more than 300,000 families save on bills and heat their homes.

“We continue to keep all options under review, including for the most vulnerable, households.

“Landlords must respond swiftly when dealing with damp and mould to ensure renters can live in safe and decent housing and the Government will introduce Awaab’s [Law](#), setting time limits on social landlords to make repairs.”