

Ministers warned families will 'fall through ice' this winter without extra help

Families on low incomes will “fall through the ice” this winter without extra [Government](#) help, as they are set to face an estimated £1,000 shortfall on their energy bills, a charity has warned.

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) is calling for a cost-of-living support boost worth at least £1,500 for families with children if the price cap rises to £3,554 in October, and again to £4,650 in January, as tipped by analysts.

It comes as Which? has warned the Government must raise its energy bills discount by at least 150% or risk pushing millions of households into financial distress.

New analysis from CPAG suggests low-income families will be short on their energy bills by an estimated £1,000 in the year to April 2023.

This is based on costs for those with children rising by an estimated £2,200 on average in 2022-23, while the Government's cost-of-living support package typically amounts to just £1,200 for qualifying households.

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Average energy bills for households without children are expected to be £1,700 higher in 2022-2023 than the year before, CPAG added.

The charity is urging the Government to increase its support offer to ensure families have enough to cover their energy bills and other costs this winter.

If the price cap rises to £3,554 in October, and £4,650 in January, this would mean at least an additional £1,500 for families with children and £700 for other households, it said.

CPAG is also calling for an 18% increase in benefits in April to help with the pressure of rising costs.

Regulator Ofgem will announce the new price cap level on Friday.

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Alison Garnham, CPAG chief executive, said: "With a £1,000 shortfall just for energy bills, many struggling families will fall through the ice this winter unless the Government makes more help available fast.

"Over the next few months families will need extra support that covers their costs and reflects family size, and social security must rise to match inflation from April.

"Four million children are already in poverty with many others now perilously close to it. Leaving their families to sink cannot be an option."

[Downing Street](#) has insisted there is no need for consumers to panic and “households, businesses and industry can be confident they will get the electricity and gas that they need over the winter”.

A Government spokesman said: “We recognise people are struggling with rising prices, which is why we are protecting millions of the most vulnerable people with at least £1,200 of direct payments, starting with the £326 cost-of-living payment, which has already been issued to more than seven million low income households.

“Through our £37 billion support package, all households will receive £400 energy payments, while vulnerable people in [England](#) are also being supported by the Government’s Household Support Fund, which was boosted by £500 million, to help pay for essentials.”