



TACKLING FUEL POVERTY AMIDST THE PANDEMIC



The pandemic has thrust our country into an economic crisis - we cannot allow the vulnerable to be hardest hit.

Groundwork has been delivering our Green Doctor Energy Advice programme since 2007, providing support to households at risk of fuel poverty across England & Wales. We provide tailored energy advice - including switching providers, tackling fuel debt and helping those in need access grants to save money on bills. We fit basic energy saving measures that improve warmth and reduce damp, mould and condensation - all issues which impact on poor health. Our qualified staff include Domestic Energy Assessors, Retrofit Assessors and Coordinators, and we also help access larger energy efficiency measures to ensure thermal comfort and reduced bills. We also deliver accredited training to frontline workers to help them identify and offer advice on fuel poverty.

The pandemic has seen our teams exceptionally busy throughout the summer. In the North of England alone we have distributed over £72,000 in emergency top-ups for utility pre payment meters, and helped households apply for £42,570 of grants to reduce their fuel bills between April and September 2020. We expect the need this winter to be exceptional.

12,000 people die on average in the UK each year because of health conditions caused or worsened by living in a cold home, and fuel poverty is a known risk factor for suicide (NEA, 2020). 1 in 3 people have been pushed into debt by the pandemic (Turn2Us, 2020) and the unemployment rate is predicted to rise to above 7% by early 2021. This combination is set to see more people pushed into fuel poverty long term.

As the months turn colder, the demand for energy will increase as people spend more time in their homes this winter. There will be no warm shelters such as community cafes or even family members homes to turn to - so more people will spend time in cold homes, causing some of the very health issues that will put them most at risk. Householders who had previously managed their finances are now finding themselves struggling to meet basic living expenses, like food and energy. Fuel poverty can also become an issue for those working from home on low incomes too.

Groundwork supports the annual national Fuel Poverty Awareness Day campaign this November, to raise awareness in ensuring that those most in need are reached and supported. Those who need our help the most are often digitally excluded and unaware of support available to them. We rely on frontline agencies to provide us with referrals to identify and contact them. Together we can make a difference.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:



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