

## NPC Fuel Fact Sheet – July 2011

- The Winter Fuel Allowance is currently £250 for pensioner households under the age of 80, and £400 for the over 80s. However, the Coalition government has decided to cut the allowance in 2011 (Oct/Nov) by £50 and £100 respectively.
- When the Winter Fuel Allowance was first introduced it covered a third of the average energy bill. Today, it covers just a fifth.
- Almost one in three older people live in homes with inadequate heating or insulation making their homes more difficult to heat and/or keep warm. This is around 3.5m people.
- There were 25,400 excess winter deaths of older people last year – made up of 10,600 males and 14,800 females. The bulk of these cold related deaths affected those aged 75 and over – totalling 20,600 (81% of the total). The overall figure represents a death rate of 9 pensioners an hour during the 4 month period in question.
- Since 1997, 300,000 more pensioners have died during the winter months than at other times of the year.
- Fuel poverty is described as spending 10% or more of your total income on energy bills.
- Around 3m pensioner households are currently classified as living in fuel poverty (spending more than 10% of their income on fuel), with 1 in 4 people aged over 70.
- Every time there is a 1% increase in energy bills, a further 40,000 older people fall into fuel poverty.
- Average annual energy bills now exceed £1,200. This absorbs 15% of the income of a single pensioner dependent on the pension credit minimum guarantee (£132.50 a week) and the Winter Fuel Allowance.
- Discounts on energy bills can be given to those paying by direct debit, but up to 1m older people are without any kind of bank/building society account that would allow them to do that.
- Pre-payment meters and social tariffs can often be more expensive ways of paying energy bills, than customers believe.
- The NPC is calling for the winter fuel allowance to be raised to £500 and paid now to all pensioner households (regardless of age), an end to pre-payment meters and regulated social tariffs to give proper discounts to older customers.