



NATIONAL
HEART
FORUM



fuel poverty + health

A guide for primary care organisations, and public health and primary care professionals

Cold, damp, thermally inefficient houses which people cannot afford to heat sufficiently to protect their health are a peculiarly British public health scandal and an affront to human rights. There is a national strategy to tackle fuel poverty which includes a wide range of grant programmes to help households achieve affordable warmth by reducing fuel bills, tackling low household incomes, and providing grants for energy efficiency measures. The challenge is to ensure that fuel poverty programmes reach those in need.

Health professionals have most contact with vulnerable people. They also have the added burden on their workload caused by the effects of bad housing and cold, damp homes. Involving the NHS therefore provides the opportunity to target programmes to those most in need and most likely to benefit, but who are unlikely to apply on their own.

On average 40,000 more people die in winter (from December to March) in the UK than would be expected from death rates in the rest of the year. Over half of these deaths are from cardiovascular disease and a third from respiratory disease. This high level of excess winter mortality is not seen in countries with much colder winters than the UK, such as Finland and Russia.

The *Fuel poverty + health* toolkit is a new resource comprising a 68 page guide for primary care organisations, and public health and primary care professionals, a leaflet for health professionals, a poster for use in primary care and an easy-to-use client referral form.

The toolkit is aimed at strategic planners, NHS National Service Framework co-ordinators and leads, primary care professionals and those working on fuel poverty strategies in local partnerships. Available now, it will be an invaluable aid for winter planning in 2003/4.

Produced by:

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