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25th January 2024

Dear Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

Urgent Support required for Disabled people.

We write on behalf of the Disability Poverty Campaign Group (DPCG), to urge you to take immediate steps to support Disabled people's energy requirements. The DPCG is led by Disabled people's organisations and includes a wide range of disability and anti-poverty organisations. Our purpose is to highlight the cost-of-living crisis, as it impacts on Disabled people and their families, and to campaign for measures which could, with stronger government action, alleviate the disproportionate hardships experienced.

We are following up the letter we wrote to you in September 2023, to which we have received no response. We again highlight the fact that Disabled people, their families, and those who care for them are still woefully and inadequately supported by the Government and utility firms as we try to survive the cold weather.

The current situation is even worse than last September, as the fitting of pre-payment meters has re-commenced, plans to introduce an energy social tariff are reported to have been withdrawn, and no guidance has been published on what to do in the event of power cuts.,

Thousands of Disabled people, charities, and campaign groups such as the DPCG have been calling for an energy social tariff since the start of this cost-of-living crisis, as we knew it would make an enormous difference to disabled people's lives and the high costs of energy usage. Disabled people's energy costs are higher than those of non-disabled people, as we have to run the heating more (to cope with lower mobility or prevent severe illness due to weakened immune systems) and to charge essential medical and mobility equipment, such as oxygen machines, ceiling track hoists, through floor lifts, suction machines for tracheostomy blockages to prevent choking, and feeding pumps, not to mention multiple daily uses of washing machines and showers.

The government first pledged to introduce an energy social tariff in 2022, and this was doubled down on by the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Energy Secretary Grant Schapps last year. Now it is apparently not happening. This not only shows a disregard of the Disabled community, but confirms that the Government is not committed to meeting the needs of its Disabled citizens.



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The government gave Disabled people a £150 payment to cope with the cost-of-living crisis in the autumn of 2022 and the summer of 2023. However it appears there are no further plans to help Disabled people who are twice as likely to live in poverty, and with the cancellation of the plans for an energy social tariff, and the news that Prepayment meters can once again be forced onto households struggling with fuel debt, the current decline of Disabled living standards is becoming a human catastrophe.

In the absence of stronger and better Government intervention and support, Disabled people are not able to use energy, and have been forced to turn off heating and limit the charging of health and mobility- related equipment. This is morally unacceptable and will inevitably lead to more ill health, risk to life and increased hospital admissions. Surely this is not acceptable.

The House of Commons Energy Security and Net Zero Committee late last year estimated that there were 4,706 excess winter deaths in 2022/23 caused by living in a cold home in England, warning that another crisis is "inevitable" without further Government support for households. We know that many Disabled people live in accommodation that is cold, as well as inaccessible and unusable.

We ask the Government to deliver a better, effective package of financial support for Disabled people and for those with higher energy bills due to disability related energy use. We also ask for the energy social tariff to be resurrected as a matter of urgency, following due consultation with not only utility firms but representatives from the Disabled community.

The situation is bleak and desperate. We ask for urgent discussions between your Department and DPCG. We would welcome a meeting with you to share the concerns of Disabled people and to seek the needed solutions that would keep Disabled people safe, healthy, and independent this winter.

We look forward to your swift reply.

Yours Faithfully

On behalf of The Disability Poverty Campaign Group:

Dan White (Disability Rights UK)
Svetlana Kotova (Inclusion London)
Helen Rowlands (Inclusion London)