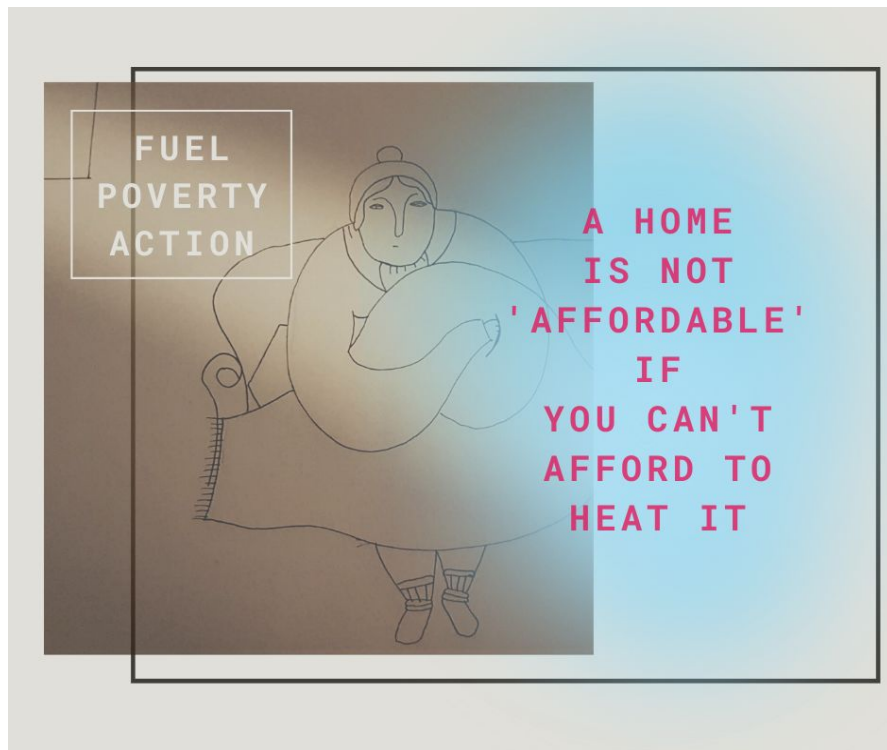


2020-2021

ANNUAL REPORT



Cover art: Rhiannon Hughes and Maddy Winters

**FUEL POVERTY
ACTION**

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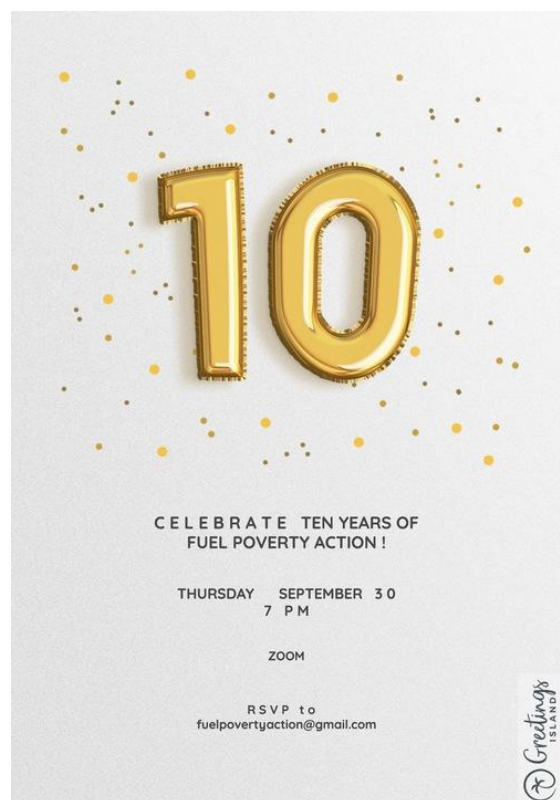
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1. Fuel Poverty Action is 10 years old

Eleven years ago, Climate Camp dissolved itself as a network in the UK, the country where this hopeful, worldwide, non-violent direct action-based movement had been born. Many of the ex-campers, now experienced organisers, focussed their energies on defending people's immediate standard of living, in the face of crushing poverty and the alarming dismemberment of the welfare state. They went on to form the backbone of UK Uncut, and later, Occupy. Others maintained their focus on the climate, arming themselves with the facts and figures, physics, and finance of energy and climate change. Some left the world of arrestable protest and formed projects to produce 'real change on the ground'. Some used and passed on their years of experience in the daughter of Climate Camp - Reclaim the Power, or later in Extinction Rebellion. A small group of friends and tent-neighbours decided to focus on both poverty and climate change at the same time. We formed Fuel Poverty Action, and produced an Energy Bill of Rights where the first "Right" was declared to be, *"the right to affordable energy to meet our basic needs"* and the second, *"the right to energy that does not harm us, the environment or the climate"*.

Remarkably, ten years on from its formation in 2011, Fuel Poverty Action is still going, still equally devoted to both goals, and determined to both acknowledge and find ways to

overcome contradictions, or apparent contradictions, between the two. It is uncommon for small grassroots organisations without consistent funding, or support from academia, industry, or NGOs, to survive so long. Yet, FPA has only grown in expertise and reputation as we continue to make waves, challenge orthodoxy, expose false solutions, and provide a platform for people in heating, housing, and financial crises to speak out in their own name.



In the UK and around the world, over these ten years, poverty has deepened, and with soaring carbon emissions, climate change has picked up speed and violence, to the

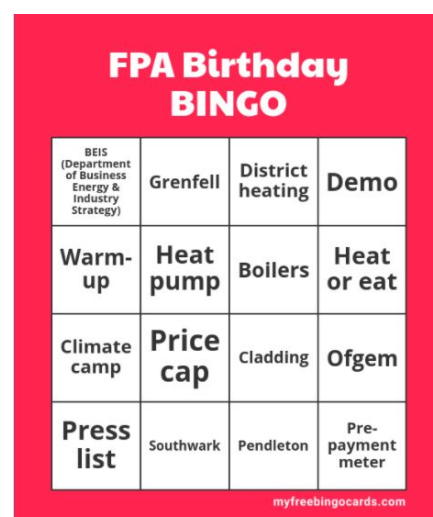
point where it can no longer be ignored. And it is no longer being ignored. Greta Thunberg says it best: "It feels like we have passed some kind of social tipping point where people are starting to realise that we cannot keep looking away from these things. We cannot keep sweeping these things under the carpet, these injustices. People are starting to find their voice, to sort of understand that they can have an impact. "The question is whether, and how, we can find the collective strength to break through the lies, the overwhelming power now gathered in the coffers of huge corporations, and the obstacles facing people fighting for their lives without money, time, or access to the media.

Our starting point is the fact that millions of people in the most atrocious situations, often far worse than what we know in the UK, are continuing to fight for the best we can win for ourselves, our children and grandchildren. For homes fit to live in that do not waste energy, but do keep us warm in winter and cool in the summer. For air we can breathe, water we can drink and swim in, and enough of it to grow crops. For fewer or later hurricanes, floods, droughts, wildfires and pandemics, for less inequality, brutality and injustice including through the cudgel of unpayable bills. For everyone to have shelter, health care, and food. For the needs of those of us with disabilities, who are young or old, laid low by discrimination, or born in the wrong part of town or of the world, to be given the same weight as the needs of those who have, over the past decade, only grown richer, more powerful, and less caring.

The Covid-19 pandemic, even as it killed loved ones and devastated communities, opened for a moment the hope of a sea-change as people saw new possibilities, questioned assumptions and authorities, and identified new priorities. That hope has to a great degree been strangled as the powers that be continue to suck up the world's resources and devote many of them, incredibly, to subsidising fossil fuels. But one thing the pandemic has certainly taught us: we don't know what's coming next.

And so, we have continued this year on the paths that FPA has long-established, working on housing, heating, energy pricing, sources of energy, and incomes. This year's annual report echoes the last, but with new developments on the housing front, on district heating, and in how we have been able to speak out, in short sound-bites, uniting the issues of fuel bills and the climate.

As a very small organisation, everything we do is done together with others, in the hope of bringing forces together and strengthening us all.



2. Summary of the year 2021-2022

As the worldwide health crisis continues, FPA, like so many others, has worked to try to mitigate its ever-growing legacy of other crises, large and small. We have adapted our work methods to more work online and less in person, doing our best to ensure that older and less digitised people, including some of our own members, are equipped and supported to brave this kind of connection. We have continued our ongoing work supporting people who ask for help in dealing with their energy companies, heat providers or landlords. This support takes many forms, from advice and advocacy to campaigning and bringing together people who are fighting similar or related battles.

"Thank you so much for your time and prompt response. I have got myself into a horrible situation and I really have not known what to do while I dealt with this alone in my flat. Finally now I can come away from the window and stop watching for the bailiffs".

K Campbell, who was facing a Warrant of Entry due to arrears.

Our main focuses this year

'Making Green Come True' - a conference pressing for energy efficiency retrofits to be rolled out at scale, while respecting the need for safe, sustainable materials, careful

assessment and monitoring, and accountability to residents. This has been followed by steadily working with many other campaigners particularly on housing and insulation, to ensure that these issues form part of their perspective.

Continuing the **Safe Cladding and Insulation Now (SCIN)** campaign for safe cladding and insulation, and supporting high-rise residents, particularly in Salford, still living with flammable cladding, or in buildings where cladding and insulation have been removed but not replaced. We are continuing to press for the replacement of flammable materials of all kinds, and in all homes, of whatever height the building and whatever the form of tenure.

District Heating (DH) - our campaign to ensure that Heat Networks, now being massively expanded in the UK, do not leave residents cold through outages or high prices. We are supporting and building our network of tenants and residents on DH systems. With them, we influence MPs, local authorities, the Heat Trust, suppliers, and Ofgem, and work in close communication with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). We published a major new report this spring, focusing on how DH issues interact with the crisis in social housing: "Holding feet to the fire: Peabody tenants confront unaccountable

heating and housing management“.

Pressing for measures to help with the huge crisis of unaffordable energy during Covid, including for people on prepayment meters. As costs soar worldwide, working with energy poverty groups in Europe to identify which measures can offer immediate and lasting relief, while also mitigating climate change. Countering a tendency in some climate campaigns to forget the impact of price rises on people in fuel poverty.

Responding to requests for a fuel poverty perspective on two huge increases to Ofgem’s price cap, including an unprecedented torrent of calls from the media for people to speak out about how their own lives and families are being impacted -- and for our views on potential solutions. Maintaining a focus on who should - and who should not - pay for the worldwide “energy crisis“.

Responding to requests for a fuel poverty perspective on practical measures to mitigate climate change, locally, nationally, and internationally, based on our experience on the ground.

Working with the new Extinction Rebellion offshoot, “Insulate Britain“ to ensure that their proposals take account of fuel poverty, the need for accountability to residents, and alternatives to petrochemical materials for insulation.

Working to get relief from poorly functioning heat pumps.

Pressing for a new pricing framework where the people who have less and use less energy do not pay more per unit used, and where everyone can afford to heat their homes, and keep cool enough in the summer.

Supporting calls from pensioners, disabled people, paid and unpaid carers, and others for an income sufficient for a decent standard of living.

“They’re a wonderful support network for people who feel like they have nowhere else to turn in fighting unfair treatment from large corporations.“

**Esther Press, St Clements development,
Tower Hamlets**

3. Keeping the heat on

At our 2020 AGM -- which forms the starting point for this year's Annual Report -- we heard a first hand account from Catalonia. Monica Guiteras of Alianza contra la Pobreza Energética (Alliance against Fuel Poverty) told us how fuel poverty and housing activists had managed to establish the principle that no one must be disconnected from their energy supply when they go into debt. This is now a consensus demand of the energy poverty lobby in the EU. In the UK, however, disconnection generally takes the form of imposing a prepayment meter, sometimes by force. You are not then "disconnected". When you can't top up the meter, you are said to "disconnect yourself".

FPA, since our beginnings, has helped individuals resist this outcome, both through advice and advocacy and through our Mini-Guide ([‘In trouble with your energy company? A Mini-Guide to your Rights’](#)). This resistance has continued during the Covid-19 pandemic, reinforced by new recognition of the problem, and commitments from the industry.

Protections written into energy suppliers' agreement with BEIS early in the pandemic made it possible for more customers to negotiate with suppliers to keep their gas and power on, especially if they have the backing of advisers and advocates. The commitments in this agreement were reaffirmed this year,

with the [addition](#) of a promise to help raise awareness of available support (we had emphasised the importance of this in our submission to Ofgem on "self-disconnection" last year, [published on their website](#) in October 2020). Important as the agreement has been, many people in crisis have no such backing from any agency which can ensure that its requirements are honoured, and even those who do have such support often find themselves rationing heat to the point of hardly using any.

Salford tower block resident and FPA member Graeme Langton says,

"I find myself being called on day in and day out to give emotional support to members of my community currently at their wit's end. We have seen a vast increase in mental health self referrals - some have been admitted several times during lockdown."

Meanwhile, even long-established protections did not apply until this year to the ever-increasing number of households connected to a heat network, since such heat networks, or "District Heating" (see below) are currently unregulated. FPA worked hard to get recognition of this gaping hole in protection, with considerable success - in theory. We raised the problem, and illustrated it, in our regular meetings with

BEIS. We contributed significantly to BEIS' heat network industry guide [Managing Heat Networks During COVID-19](#), and we were glad to see the fruits of our input, most notably here: *"the overriding imperative is to minimise risk to customers' health as a result of a heat network failing. Where a heat network failure makes it necessary for customers to use alternative expensive forms of space or water heating, they should be assured that the cost of this will be covered promptly and by direct payments so that they are able to keep warm."*

Similarly, a letter from Kwasi Kwarteng to the Heat Networks Industry Council (HNIC) encourages them *"to go further including a commitment to consider pausing debt repayment and bill payments for consumers in financial distress in line with the Agreement between BEIS and energy supply companies"*.

This letter reflected many months of FPA lobbying BEIS, issuing a press release, writing to HNIC, and raising the issue at meetings of Divas, a friendly network of women working in the heat network industry. We also wrote directly to the Minister, a letter which was picked up by Utility Week in an article, 'Left out in the cold - no protection for hundreds of thousands if their heating fails this winter'. Kwasi Kwarteng's reply to us, received 27 Nov 2020 said:

"I want to work with you and Fuel Poverty Action to ensure that heat network companies are providing compensation where appropriate, and I will continue to call for this if necessary."

In autumn-winter 2020-2021, we also worked with allies in the End Fuel Poverty Coalition (EFPC) and Repowering London to press for better protections and better implementation for gas and electricity customers, and to ensure that help goes beyond the debt deferral schemes being negotiated between the government, Ofgem and suppliers.

As EFPC members we worked on their powerful submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review consultation, titled "End Fuel Poverty before the Winter", and contributed an insistence that Fuel Poverty Debt Relief *"go beyond deferral of payment. Many people will not use the energy they need to keep warm and healthy if it means building up debts for the future which they do not know how they can pay."* The coalition said a true debt relief programme would *"enable a 'quick fix' to those in extreme fuel poverty this winter"* pending realisation of more long term measures to end fuel poverty.

4. Blood out of a stone

The reassessment of priorities forced on governments by the Covid-19 pandemic gave rise to a hope that after decades of income being redistributed upwards, from the poor to the rich, this process could finally be reversed, or at least halted. Such hopes have dwindled over the past year, at least in the UK. An initial uplift in the scandalously low Universal Credit has now come to an end, while taxes have been increased in the most regressive way possible, by loading health and social care costs onto National Insurance, as opposed to income tax. The New Economics Foundation (NEF) say these measures will affect 2.5 million working households on low incomes, and the combined result, for those hit by both, has been conservatively [calculated](#) at £1,290 per year, on average. In addition, there are pay freezes, lost jobs, the planned withdrawal of the pension triple lock, and routine denial of disability benefits, which never had an uplift at all. Millions of families of workers in low paid jobs or working unpaid at home are dependent on food banks, and are forced to ration their energy use. Hundreds of thousands are homeless, in a pandemic.

This is the context in which default energy prices have risen, in autumn 2021 alone, by 12-13%, and by much more for those who followed government advice to switch to new lower-cost suppliers: many of these have gone bust, leaving their customers worse off than before. A further energy price increase in

April 2022 threatens to be even harsher - a forecast 30% increase would add another £400 to the average dual fuel bill.

"FPA have been campaigning for fairer charging for fuel and fewer deaths from cold and lack of adequate pensions and benefits for 10 long years. As Gas prices rise by up to 70 % and electric costs more in the UK than most other European countries there work to seek changes only increases in importance."

Linda Burnip, DPAC

The increase is said to be due to the rising cost of fossil gas in the context of rising demand: Ofgem is bound to allow energy suppliers to cover their costs and make a "reasonable profit". In addition, there are costs associated with the urgent and indispensable transition to renewable energy and sustainable heating systems. These too are being loaded onto bills.

Clearly, something has to give, and at the moment it is the living standards, and even the lives, of working class people. States and corporations have more or less given up denying the existence of climate change. But their first response has been to force the poorest people - ironically, those whose carbon emissions are lowest - to pay for a transition to sustainable energy, as well as the soaring cost of fossil fuels. The Yellow Vests rebellion in France has served as a

warning internationally that this will not be accepted, either in metropolitan countries or in the Global South.

Proposals to deal with this situation are coming from all political parties, and from think tanks and campaigns of all kinds. FPA's role has been four-fold:

Firstly, we are exploring, and urging others, including the government, to explore alternatives to the current murderous solution. The first, of course, is to ensure that people do not need so much energy, through insulation and other energy efficiency measures (see below). But on a purely monetary level, alternatives include:

- Our proposal for a new pricing framework where a basic level of energy would be free for all, and higher prices would apply above that level. Due to our lack of resources, we have not had the capacity this year to interrogate and if appropriate develop "Energy for All" (see last year's annual report), but a drastic change like this is needed, now more than ever. This proposal would reverse the present unfair system where those who have least, and use least energy, pay more per unit than their better-off neighbours.
- The "Warm Home Discount" is a step in this direction. Paid for by suppliers it now offers £140 each winter for pensioners and some others on low incomes. We strongly support its extension and increase, and consolidation as a right - not a "first come first serve" hand-out.

- Public ownership of energy production and distribution, in whatever form or forms, including Community Energy.
- Protection of those least able to pay, including by preventing disconnections, or so-called "self-disconnection" through prepayment meters. The principles established in Catalonia can be useful here, and we have worked to share these.
- Fair taxation, and where the prices of fossil fuels are made to reflect their real costs, without social subsidy, then a "fee and dividend" or other system must return any carbon taxes to domestic energy users. The necessary investment in new infrastructure can and must be raised elsewhere and not from consumers who cannot afford to pay.
- A social tariff, where prices are lower for those who can least afford them.

The repercussions in practice of different specific policies proposed are not always easy to determine. Through the auspices of the Right to Energy Coalition (R2E), of which we are a member, we are discussing them with colleagues in Europe (particularly Spain and Belgium) who are wrestling with the same questions, and who have experience of some of these proposals being brought into effect.

Secondly, we consistently point to the huge increase in wealth and capital at the other end of the economy. Lack of transparency in the energy market, and in the way costs and

cash flows are apportioned between fuel extractors, power generators, distributors and suppliers, makes it hard to identify where the extra money ends up when we pay a higher price for our supply. But we know that the fossil fuel industry, heavily subsidised by governments to the tune of £450 billion last year, is making exceptional profits.

Thirdly, we provide a platform for people at the sharp end of these choices to convey their own experience and views, mostly through the media, and to keep the hard realities before the public eye - and the eyes of policy makers in particular. This year has seen a sharp increase in demand from the media for what they call "case studies", specifying, sometimes in detail and at short notice, what sort of age or family or experience they are looking for, in what area of Britain, or what kind of housing. Our members Diane and Graeme have picked up some of these calls, including from radio, tv and press in other countries, wanting the news from the UK, and we have arranged dozens of other interviews for people to talk about their personal experience. It is a struggle sometimes to ensure that people are not presented as helpless victims and have a chance to convey their own points of view, and who they hold responsible.

At the same time, the media is a vital way for FPA as a whole to speak out. As well as our social media presence, which has increased massively this year, we have for many years been called on to comment on price rises and this work goes on throughout the year. This year there were three peaks, in February before the year's first increase in Ofgem's cap

on prices, in August when the second increase was announced, and in September-October as it came into effect.

We were interviewed in February on Good Morning Britain, in a wide-ranging interview on BBC News, and in an even more in-depth session on Resistance TV. Energy industry journal Energy Live News carried our comment,

"With huge numbers of people already hungry and cold, this is no time for further pressure. Ofgem is looking at suppliers costs. But if prices go up, so must incomes including wages, furlough, and benefits like Universal Credit. And our homes must finally be well insulated: this increase will mean much more than a £96 rise for people who are forced to pay to heat the streets."

In August we were quoted in the Big Issue, and appeared live on LBC, Radio London, and Sky News. In September our warning that many people were already counting pennies and rationing their heat was picked up by a wide range of print media outlets, from the Financial Times and the Independent to UK Today. FPA co-director Ruth London then did prolonged interviews on Woman's Hour, on the often ignored impact of fuel poverty on women and on children, and on Sky TV News, all before the price cap increase actually came in. These were opportunities to press home our message, which also went out through our work with the End Fuel Poverty Coalition. In their July press release, for example, we commented,

“With thousands dying of cold every year the current energy pricing system – complete with price caps – is not fit for purpose. As prices rise, a carbon tax rebate would help, but won’t solve this.

“We need a new pricing framework, where poorer people don’t pay higher rates than the rich. We need well-insulated housing, renewable energy, and wages and benefits that meet our costs. No special provisions or consumer protection will stop fuel poverty from killing pensioners and wrecking childhoods. The pandemic has taught millions that real change can’t wait.”

Finally, we are working to establish a principle of “affordability” for energy prices, beginning with the price of District Heating. Ofgem, tasked with squaring the circle of rising production costs and falling domestic incomes has increasingly insisted that affordability, or “Ability to Pay” should be the criterion for setting the rate at which energy bill debts are repaid but has not proposed extending that principle to prices. In the District Heating world, however, one heat provider - Aberdeen Heat and Power - has already applied a system where heat prices are set at a level not exceeding 10% of their customers’ expected disposable income. Total fuel costs, including also estimated electricity, come to under 6% of the income of a pensioner couple and under 9% of the income of a single person on a state pension. FPA have met with Aberdeen Heat and Power about the practicalities, and have worked to promote the idea in other heat networks and in BEIS. There are now attempts to extend

the affordable heat principle elsewhere, and to networks using sustainable, renewable heat. This would indeed be a breakthrough.

5. Making Green Come True

Energy efficiency in the home, beginning with homes that are well designed, in good repair, and well insulated, is critical to keeping warm in the winter and cool in summer. It is also indispensable for mitigating climate change.

Making a new home genuinely zero-carbon at the outset is around [five times cheaper](#) than retrofitting it later, and will almost always reduce residents' energy bills as well. Yet current building standards are set so low that thousands of the homes being built now will need retrofitting in the near future to meet energy efficiency targets. Meanwhile existing housing stock - the leakiest in Europe - is expected to still provide 80% of the homes we will be living in in 2050. The UK lags miles behind other countries on both insulation and new heating systems.

Unmistakably a win-win, retrofitting existing housing is not necessarily as straightforward as it first appears. Everything depends on the materials used, the suitability and execution of retrofits chosen, and accountability to residents.

A huge amount of good work is being done by people campaigning for, designing, and carrying out retrofits. But much of it is planned and executed without any genuine, informed consultation or systematic feedback from residents. Our December 2020 event, 'Making Green Come True' focused on the

gap between what is promised or advertised, and what actually happens on the ground. The event was an extraordinary coming together of people who normally move in different worlds: tenants and residents' organisations, fire safety and cladding campaigns, retrofit installers and industry leaders, people from the Black, women's, disability, and climate movements, people with bitter personal experience of failed retrofits, people fighting for social justice for the Global South, and asylum seekers and others confronting destitution in the UK.

We hope this will be the first of a series of such events, based on the experiences of residents in both older and new-build housing, which will offer a chance to explore and debate the issues, together with heating and housing "experts". We hope a follow-up 'Making Green Come True' event, this time focused on heating, will follow in 2022. The events, however, are just moments in our ongoing work on these issues.

You know FPA are an organisation that I have so much respect for and always willing to support where I can. So if you need me ..then I will block out the time....count me in"

Asad Rehman, Director of War on Want, responds to invitation to speak at Making Green Come True

We were joined by some outstanding speakers and contributors at the conference:

Ruth London

Founder member, Fuel Poverty Action. Pensioner, grandmother, long time organiser with women's and climate movements.

Dr Stuart Hodkinson

Campaigning academic, University of Leeds. His research focuses on the devastating human costs from the privatisation and financialisation of housing.

Pauline Saunders

Founder member, CIVALLI Support, the organisation for victims of failed cavity wall insulation. In 2019, Pauline was shortlisted for Inside Housing's Women in Housing Awards for Woman of the Year!

Tracey Rogers

Social housing tenant, Pembroke Park, Ruislip.

Tony O'Brien

Retired carpenter-joiner and long-time union organiser who has been active in the TUC since 1963.

Ellen Lebethé

Chair of Lambeth Pensioners Action Group and Vice-chair of the National Pensioners Convention. She has a long history of struggles in the UK and in South Africa.

Asad Rehman

Prominent spokesperson in the climate justice movement for over 25 years, working with War on Want, Friends of the Earth, Amnesty UK, Global Justice UK and Newham Monitoring Project.

Emma Dent Coad

Long term-political activist, socialist, campaigner on inequalities and MP for Kensington.

Dr Tom Woolley

Architect, consultant and environmental researcher, Rachel Bevan Architects.

Alexa Waud

Co-director, Fuel Poverty Action. Also an organiser and researcher working for Democratic Society.

Graeme Langton

Tenant, Pendleton Together Housing Group and elected chair of Malus Court Tenants and Residents Association.

Bridgit Sam-Bailey

Chair of Lewisham Pensioners Forum, and a retired trade unionist and academic, proactive in the pensioners' movement.

Phil Murphy

Fire safety consultant, ex-firefighter, tower block resident and housing campaigner from Manchester.

Claire Glasman

Founding member of WinVisible Women, a grassroots multi-racial organisation of women with disabilities.

Mark Elton

Cornish architect and Passivhaus designer at Cowan architects.

Syed Ahmed

Chair of Repowering London and director of the Parliamentary Renewable & Sustainable Energy Group.

Rhiannon Hughes

Campaigner and researcher for Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation, a surviving tenant led housing federation.

Dr Donal Brown

Research fellow at University of Leeds, non-Exec director at Retrofit Works and has co-authored a green recovery package proposal for housing with New Economics Foundation."

Government funding

The government's big initiative for retrofitting homes - 2020's Green Homes Grant - appeared almost designed to end in chaos and unfulfilled hopes. FPA was among the many voices trying to forestall this disaster without ending up with nothing. We failed: poor design and administration brought the scheme to an early end, with a tiny proportion of claims translated into actual insulation. As the Guardian reports, "There were more than 123,000 applications for the grant by the end of February, but only 28,000 vouchers had been issued and only 5,800 energy efficiency measures had been installed."

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme has continued, with £500 million of government funding, but the lion's share of the allocated £1.5 bn was returned to the Treasury. There has been no move to replace the scheme, or the state money which would have gone to cutting fuel poverty and carbon emissions.

Planning housing and heating

In June FPA ran a workshop on fuel poverty at a community event organised by Just Space.

Just Space is an informal coalition of grassroots groups focused on influencing the Mayor of London's planning strategy. The workshop was part of their response to the 2021 London Plan, following on from their work on the 2015 London Plan and their publication 'Towards a Community-Led Plan for London.' The workshop involved members from various community groups discussing a briefing by FPA on issues like district heating,

cladding, and energy companies' monopolies. The results and discussion from this workshop will be published by Just Space.

Fuel poverty and carbon emissions in the Private Rented Sector

In January 2021, FPA took part in a public consultation on improving the energy performance of privately rented homes. Our submission to the inquiry was the outcome of extended consultation with our membership, a briefing with BEIS, and many discussions with housing and fuel poverty campaigners. We refused to accept the arguments being put forward by landlords, who claimed that if forced to invest too much in bringing up their homes to a reasonable standard of energy efficiency (EPC band C), they would leave the rental market, and their tenants and other prospective renters would be left without a home. But to counter this danger we did insist that legislation must be accompanied by safeguards, to prevent evictions, or rents being raised after improvements: a fear expressed by one of our own members, "M", a pensioner who lives in a cold and expensive-to-heat privately rented home.

"Fuel Poverty Action are tireless advocates for households struggling to pay their energy bills. FPA fight to improve the energy efficiency of our homes, working to keep families warm, safe and healthy. With fuel bills rising and the effects of the pandemic still with us, FPA are needed now more than ever."

**Syed Ahmed, Director, Energy for London,
Chair, Community Energy London**

Retrofit empty homes

One of the solutions we pressed for in the Private Rented Sector consultation is the deep retrofitting of empty homes. Deep retrofits can be intolerably disruptive, especially for residents who are elderly or disabled, have young children, or are unwell, if they are forced to live in what can become a building site. But there are over 268,000 long-term empty homes in England, and the number is rapidly rising. (This, while 98,300 homeless families, are housed in often unsuitable and over-crowded temporary accommodation). We told the government inquiry,

"This is obscene. But retrofitting homes is much less expensive and less disruptive when they are empty, and the huge number of empty homes could be seen as an opportunity: they should be rapidly and thoroughly refurbished to a high standard of energy efficiency, and then let. If they are still left empty, local authorities should have the power and the finance to buy them at a favourable rate. This would make a huge positive difference to the entire rental market and the balance of power between landlords and tenants, effectively removing the dilemma facing tenants like M. In addition, empty homes, once improved, could be used to temporarily decant people who cannot remain in their own homes while they are retrofitted."

We have since then been pressing for this solution in many other contexts where we're asked to speak, do media interviews, or advise about energy efficiency.

Better late than never

We have finally had good news from Pembroke Park, in Hillingdon, Northwest London where FPA has been supporting residents for many years. After years of pressure from residents, and the changing climate post-Grenfell, a new estate management has decided to do something about the fact that the estate was built by Taylor Woodrow in 2010 with its insulation missing. Tenant Tracey Rogers wrote in, in January to tell us:

"After 10 years of being cold, A2 sent 4 people around today to investigate my moans. The outcome is my house has no insulation, my son's room has to have all the walls and ceiling removed, the insulation in the loft had all fallen down (what little was there). I have to be moved out of my property for at least 6 weeks. So yes I have been literally heating the street. My next battle will be compensation."

Tracey later got back in touch to tell us that her home was a building site, the workmen wore no masks, no alternative accommodation was offered and her daughter and grandchildren, who live with her, had to move out and find somewhere to live for six weeks in the middle of a pandemic.

There are still many residents in Pembroke Park whose homes are not being insulated at all, and who have no idea when or if they will be.

Insulate Britain

We were delighted when, after years of our raising the issue of insulation as a key climate demand that immediately affects people's standard of living now, an Extinction Rebellion offshoot initiated a new campaign, Insulate Britain. Insulate Britain members have gone to jail for blocking roads demanding energy efficiency retrofits of homes, beginning with insulation and also including heat pumps. We have worked with that campaign to help ensure that their programme adequately takes account of the needs of people in fuel poverty, in the context of the likely timing of retrofits, the unfairness of pricing and low incomes, and the lack of accountability to residents that has caused so many retrofitting disasters - not least, Grenfell.



6. Safe cladding and insulation now: Four years on from Grenfell

Four years on from Grenfell, most social housing buildings over six storeys high with ACM cladding have finally had it removed. And this year funding was announced that is supposed to relieve leaseholders in similar buildings of the crippling costs of cladding removal. But for buildings under 18m high (six storeys), the best that has been offered by the government is a loan scheme for leaseholders. Treating buildings under 18m as reasonably safe is an approach that many experts have criticised. For disabled residents, the elderly and less mobile, and for parents, the top floors of a 16m building with hazardous cladding remain a frightening place to be. There are additional obstacles for people in buildings with dangers other than Grenfell's ACM cladding.

The current Building Safety Bill and this year's Fire Safety Act both strengthen safety requirements and lines of responsibility. But they effectively pass the buck to leaseholders and local authorities to cover enormous costs, while protecting developers, freehold landlords and the commercial interests of manufacturers and bodies responsible for safety tests. All over the country, leaseholders, tenants, and shared owners are trapped in dangerous buildings, or buildings where cladding has been removed leaving them cold in the winter. Even existing provisions are undermined by lack of funding and lack of expertise.

FPA did a Response to the Government's Consultation on reforms to the Fire Safety Order, and publicised failings in the Building Safety Bill feeding into an initiative by residents groups and Grenfell campaigners designed to improve the bill. The flaws in this hard won post-Grenfell legislation were a key issue at Making Green Come True and, along with the desperate situation of residents, the lack of provision for those with disabilities, and the brutal side-lining of the Grenfell community, have been the focus of many campaigns throughout the year.



We're really pleased to be in touch with a dynamic new group set up by disabled leaseholders in unsafe housing: CLADDAG, the disabled leaseholders action group. They've already hugely raised the profile of the situation of disabled people in unsafe housing. We added our voice to the government consultation on Personal Emergency Evacuation plans and a university study on high rise building evacuation - drawing on Salford experiences - and hope to collaborate further.

Salford, Greater Manchester

As FPA, our main cladding and insulation focus this year has been on Salford high rise blocks. As advertised in the crusading local journal the [Salford Star](#), Pendleton residents ran a session at FPA's Dec 2020 conference, Making Green Come True. The blocks now finally had their cladding off, but many residents faced freezing conditions that winter with no replacement for the insulation they had lost - and now another winter is upon us. The situation is made still worse by the fact that the heat pumps used in some of the buildings have always been a problem for some residents - one of our contacts has not put his heating on for years because it is unaffordable in his flat. We brought in heat pump experts but, as they explained, the heat pumps have no chance of working effectively in draughty, poorly insulated accommodation. Landlord Pendleton Together offered small monthly payments (£25) to help with additional heating costs, but some residents' extra costs were several times that amount. Of course in these circumstances, many just can't afford to keep their homes warm and healthy. The buildings will be uninsulated for another winter at least. On top of this there are the ongoing fire safety problems - from faulty fire doors to inadequate evacuation plans.

After endless attempts to get proper action through complaints, appeals to local politicians, and press coverage, FPA member Graeme Langton has been working on legal action with lawyers engaged by Tenant Claim. There are now over 200 cases pending, with ever more tenants signing up. Legal cases are being based on evidence that the flats are not

fit for human habitation. Experts assessing the flats found a whole catalogue of problems, from serious damp to ongoing fire hazards, as well as the dire situation with the heat pump system. We will be continuing to support and publicise the situation wherever possible. The first of many possible cases have now been filed. After a typically long wait for a response from Pendleton Together residents have now been notified that the respondents in the case are seeking expert opinion in respect of all of the expert evidence against them. In the meantime the installation of new insulation that as of July 2021 was scheduled to start in some blocks in the autumn and winter, has been rescheduled for the spring and summer 2022: five years after Grenfell.

7. All together on housing

Fuel Poverty Action are regular participants in all sorts of housing alliances, including the Radical Housing Network, Homes for All, Action on Empty Homes, Just Space, Tower Blocks UK, and the London Tenants Federation. Behind the scenes, we critique and contribute to drafts of manifestos, statements, resources and campaign materials. At public events, we ensure that the need for homes to be warm and safe is included in housing campaigns, making the point that a home is not affordable if you can't afford to heat it. We invite to these forums and networking hubs people we are working with on issues such as district heating, heat pumps, or cladding.

We supply speakers on housing issues for pensioners' organisations, unions or trades councils. In April 2021, our co-director Ruth spoke at a Newham Trades Council meeting on Housing - we then followed up on local issues raised there, e.g. helping to organise support for a tenant of a hellish local hostel, Brimstone House, who was working to get the council to respond to her young daughters' disabilities.

"Fuel poverty action is a safe haven for whomever is in need regardless of who u are"

Nuna Al-Rashdi, mother of a disabled child, Brimstone House, Newham

"I'm amazed that Fuel Poverty Action has such influence despite limited resources. They've always been very supportive of Advice for Renters."

Jacky Peacock OBE, Chief Executive, Advice for Renters

We have worked consistently with Advice 4 Renters, based in the London Borough of Brent, and Ruth has served on the Project Advisory Group of their highly successful befriending and mentoring service, Under One Roof. That project, where issues of housing, heating, health, disability, care, employment, and income are dealt with together, as they appear in daily life, has now received funding for a further five years. We look forward to working with A4R's new service, A4R energy, which will focus specifically on fuel poverty.

In turn, we invited SHAC to contribute a section to our [dossier](#) on the District Heating crisis facing Peabody residents in Phoenix Works development, Tower Hamlets. Suzanne Muna's contribution was crucial in putting mismanagement of heating in the context of the way social housing providers have become in essence huge corporations, divorced from their residents and their roots.

8. Climate breakdown: The enduring emergency

The changing climate is now undeniable, and even sceptical politicians are having to face its consequences. Where fossil fuels had been seen as a way to keep warm cheaply, people are increasingly facing the cruel effects of unpredictable floods, storms, extreme cold periods, and heat waves. Now there is a real threat that the Gulf Stream will soon fail to provide the mild weather on which our homes, public buildings, energy supplies, and transport systems are based. The current increases in energy bills, devastating as they are, are just a taster of what such a calamity will do to our bills, let alone its effect on the rest of our lives. Meanwhile, there is the fear that heat waves will lead to huge demand for air conditioning, leaving fuel poor people without relief, and causing a vicious circle of further CO2 emissions, with unsustainable demand on electricity supplies.

All of this can and must be addressed through determined and successful action on housing and heating and cooling systems. FPA has contributed to formulating specific demands in specific places, countering special interests, eg from the petrochemical based insulation industry, and giving a platform to people who have been affected by failing green deals and programmes in the past. A high point in this process was our December 2020 conference, 'Making Green Come True' (above). Where they are not accountable and appropriate, or where they are badly conceived or executed,

"green" measures can fail to achieve their climate objectives, and succeed only in making lives more difficult and alienating people who would otherwise support a climate agenda.

We have also had a role in pressing for pricing changes that are both socially just and designed to reduce carbon emissions. When invited to speak publicly in the mainstream media in response to rising prices, we consistently include the impact on our bills of the changing climate. We add our voice, as an organisation fighting poverty, to the voices pressing on the urgency of action on the climate front.

This is after all a crucial part of defending our standard of living. Live interviews, especially the longer ones like some this year on BBC and Sky TV and on LBC, and BBC Woman's Hour, were an opportunity to make the connections and counter a narrative that sets the climate and poverty concerns apart from each other or even at odds.

At the same time we have continued to help climate activists to understand and to connect with the realities and the imperatives of fuel poverty and bad housing. The most obvious example is our work with Insulate Britain (see above). But this is a constant process that goes on in many forums.

In one small example, in October 2020 we co-signed an open letter from climate NGOS to the Bank of England's Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF), urging it to ensure that any future financial support for companies via the CCFF includes emissions reductions conditions. The letter noted that most CCFF loans have gone to companies in high-carbon sectors, whereas projects which cut emissions provide greater economic returns. In signing, we added to the draft the fact that many such projects would also immediately improve health, by cutting air pollution, improving energy efficiency at home and reducing fuel poverty.

"FPA has played an important role in the wider climate justice movement."

Peter Coville, Occasional contributor to Open Democracy and blogger on theunfinishedrevolution.net

In another, a deeply personal [Ecologist article](#), anticipating the Making Green Come True conference in December 2020, Alexa Waud says the conference will confront the impact of bad retrofits, the danger of rent increases, and the oppression of people and destruction of environments around the world caused by mining of materials for renewable energy.

"With my Fuel Poverty Action hat set aside, I often fall into the climate campaigner pattern of thought. With the urgency of the climate crisis and the draftiness of UK homes front of mind, I tend to see mass retrofit as a no-brainer solution."

This conference will show that it does, in fact, require many brains, or rather a whole community of people thinking and grappling with retrofit's challenging questions...

Challenging questions about health, jobs, and ripple effects from the point of extraction all the way up to the atmosphere. We need to fight for both liveable homes and for a liveable planet, and attention to detail and the domestic will only strengthen our demands and our power."

We've continued to be called on for visioning exercises on how action on climate and poverty can merge. Early in the year, for instance, we contributed to the London LEAP project organised by Platform London, 'Participatory policies for a fairer and greener London'. We took part in three live consultations, and contributed in writing to their [final report](#). Lately, we have been involved in discussing and preparing for the coming COP26 conference in Glasgow.

9. District heating

District Heating (DH), also known as “heat networks”, is like central heating for a whole block, estate, or neighbourhood. It now provides only a small proportion of heating in the UK but it is much more common on the Continent, is being promoted by the government, and is growing very rapidly. In London, it is the default for new developments, as well as being common in older council properties. District heating networks are not regulated by Ofgem, so there is no price cap. And residents on a DH estate cannot switch.

If well designed and run, district heating can be reliable and effective. It can make heat much more affordable and greatly increase residents’ warmth and health. If based on renewable energy sources, as is beginning to be the case, it can be crucial to cutting carbon emissions. But in too many cases - new estates as well as old - it is badly designed, badly maintained, badly administered, and overpriced.

Between persistent outages and unbearable prices, unregulated, unaccountable and uncaring heat providers are likely to have deaths on their accounts this Covid winter, despite widespread and determined efforts by residents. We will never know how many.

Work on District Heating has been a consistent and substantial part of FPA’s work

for four years. FPA is now the go-to organisation for residents with problems with their heat network, and we have worked with residents in some areas for many years.

We also fill a vital role in bringing DH users’ concerns to the attention of policy makers - and bringing residents to meet with the policy makers themselves. Legislation is due in this parliament, but until then heat networks are unregulated, except for some limited legislation on metering and billing. And even when regulation comes in, it will not solve everything, especially as both heat providers and landlords often act as if they are simply above the law.

Since 2016 we have been doing all we can to support DH residents’ many fights for reliable, affordable heat and hot water. We deal with many situations where people are being left in the cold, or without hot water, again and again and sometimes for long periods. On 23rd February this year we published [‘Advice for people on heat networks \(“District Heating”\) having trouble with outages, high prices, or both’](#) on our website. This guide breaks down avenues available to residents to seek redress, potential levers, and some success stories.

Our five years of pressure for government funding to relieve residents stuck with a disastrous heat network appear to be

bearing some fruit. The Heat Network Efficiency Scheme is projected to start in 2022/23, and a pilot is under way now. The scheme is intended to support improvements to existing heat networks that are "operating sub-optimally and resulting in poor outcomes for operators and customers." It is "subject to further funding" and we will be watching closely.

Holding feet to the fire

At the beginning of April this year, we published a revealing dossier [‘Holding feet to the fire: Peabody tenants confront unaccountable heating and housing management’](#) showing how "affordable rent" families in Phoenix Works - a new build development in Tower Hamlets - have been left in the cold because their heat network and their social housing tenancies have created a legal limbo. For their heating they have no control of prices, no contract, no legal rights, and no one to complain to.

This crisis has been created by a toxic – but increasingly common – mix of unaccountable housing and unaccountable heating. The dossier explores the complexities of district heating pricing and the position of social housing tenants on a private, mostly leaseholder, estate. It chronicles the tenants' long fight for affordable warmth and accountability.

The BEIS heat network team were helpful in trying to get the various parties to work together and accept responsibilities, and their involvement also led to an intervention by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at BEIS, Lord Callanan, who wrote to Peabody

CEO Brendan Sarsfield.

Based on the dossier, FPA was invited to discuss the issues raised with energy regulator Ofgem. The Ofgem team working with BEIS on the regulatory aspects of a district heating market framework told us that the dossier was "comprehensive, very timely, and reminds people of the urgency and seriousness of the issues" and that "BEIS is keen for Ofgem to understand things from FPA's perspective." They wrote to us, "It would be really useful if we could cover a general overview of the issues in the report and your awareness / engagement on other issues across the sector which the report alludes to [including] affordability, reliability, service levels".

"After hitting multiple brick walls trying to get to the bottom of mysterious governance and pricing for my district heating system I felt like I'd struck gold when I found FPA. They have connected me to tenants, leaseholders and professionals who have helped me start to challenge what is frankly a ludicrously unfair unregulated operation.

***Esther Press, St Clements development,
Tower Hamlets***

The resulting meeting (5 May) was was long and intensive, raising not only general principles, but detailed issues that they said they had not considered before , such as who gets the benefit of monies raised from the sale of electricity in "combined heat and



"Fuel Poverty Action were a great help to me and my neighbours when we were being severely overcharged by our district heating system paying 4 times the amount as regular heating. With their help and advice I was able to fight to secure a lower tariff and obtain a refund and compensation. Without Fuel Poverty Action I could not have done this on my own so I can't thank them enough!!"

Miss Lewis - Peabody Resident

power“ DH, and who pays for the constant glitches during the often prolonged period when a heat network is being installed around an estate. Other issues included oversizing, overheating, accountability, and the “fragmentation of responsibilities between public and private bodies“ in estates like Phoenix Works, along with the basic principle that where heat cannot be made affordable then a heat network is not a suitable solution.

the Morning Star, Sheffield Star, on social media, in numerous newsletters, and in Inside Housing, who included it in their ["weekly round-up"](#) of the most important headlines for housing professionals“.

Our work on the dossier also helped us to organise a meeting of residents from Phoenix Works and two other nearby developments, St Clements and New Festival Quarter, with their MP, Apsana Begum. On 4 February Ms Begum committed to taking their issues forward with the council, the GLA, the heat provider and landlords, and in parliament. Other responses came from the Competition and Markets Authority, the local Mayor, and the estate’s manager KFH (who were initially encouraging but then backed away).

With heat networks and housing developments like this one becoming more and more common, the dossier serves as a warning, a guide to needed changes, and a handbook for action for the growing number of residents affected by unaccountable heating and housing systems. Meanwhile, against the odds, the Phoenix Works tenants have won major price reductions - so far a reduction of their tariff by one half. A further struggle, with our support, has secured some substantial compensation.

The dossier, and the situation on that estate and others, got good coverage in the Times,

"I didn't know [FPA] existed. I feel blessed to have found it and I felt totally supported. It's a safe space to express the impact of living with chronic failures and costs to health. Thank you for setting this up!"

Nasima Khanom, Camden

Residents meetings with BEIS

As more DH residents got in touch with us, we launched a survey to collect data on the common issues residents were facing (see Appendix 2). We then set up and chaired two meetings - one on pricing, one on outages - between residents and the BEIS Heat Networks team. Residents from 19 estates took part, some of them in both meetings.



Complete our [Heat Network Survey](#) - now!

A "heat network" works like central heating for a whole block, estate, or district. If your heating comes from such a system and you are having problems with it - we want to hear from you!

The meetings gave residents an opportunity to put their situations directly to the civil servants working on regulating the sector. This was invaluable to all sides of the conversation, giving BEIS the gritty information to formulate legislation, and giving residents a chance to get support for dealing with problems before the legislation is in place.

After the success of these meetings, FPA decided to work towards:

- A WhatsApp group for district heating residents experiencing issues discussed at our meetings with BEIS. The purpose of the group will be for rapid response feedback or advice. For example, if a resident is going through a tribunal process and is looking to prepare, another member who has been through the process may be able to offer advice.
- Bi-annual online meetings for more long term reporting to and updating one another.

Still more estates have got in touch since the meetings, and these initiatives are sorely needed. However, they will have to take account of our capacity, as we continue our existing advice, advocacy, and responses to BEIS and to government consultations as legislation approaches.

Helping to shape legislation

In conjunction with supporting residents dealing with urgent problems on their estates and developments, we have helped to shape the coming legislation. The two are closely connected: it is the day to day reality that must be dealt with by the law, and FPA has provided the primary channel for the team drawing up the legislation to see and understand how these realities play out in practice - from the point of view of users, not suppliers of heat. The BEIS meetings and a series of one-to-one approaches have been part of this process, but so too have been our responses to government consultations, and to the Heat Trust, "an independent, non-profit consumer champion for heat networks" made up of network operators. For example, in November 2020

we responded to a Heat Trust consultation on metering and billing; our responses are reflected in the [Heat Trust's report and decisions](#). Heat Trust rules are expected to form a key basis for the national legislation which will be compulsory for all. Please see our consultation responses online. They are always the product of consultation with residents directly affected.

Still out of pocket when heat networks fail

One critical issue on many estates is compensation for outages. Without compensation people can't afford to pay to run alternative space and water heaters, even where these are provided. Yet many heat suppliers give no compensation at all, and even those who do start it only after 24 hours of outage, and make it difficult to access. An intensive fight on this issue is being waged on Myatts Field North, scene of our first involvement with heat networks in 2017 (see [Not Fit for Purpose](#)); this year we have been supporting residents there again. It has also been a key issue in Southwark, where the council's assurances that "no one will be out of pocket", and promises made in meetings with FPA and Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations have not been fulfilled. For an account of this year's organising in Southwark see Appendix 1. And it has been a major point of pressure in our discussions with BEIS. We mentioned above (Section 1, Keeping the Heat On) a letter from energy minister Kwasi Kwarteng in October 2020 to signatories of the Covid Agreement reached earlier with the Heat Networks Industry Council (HNIC, a consortium of heat providers; see our 2019-2020 Annual Report).

With the Government about to publish its proposals for the regulation of heat networks, the tireless work of Fuel Poverty Action is vital to ensuring that they focus on the customers' experience"

Michael King, Member & Board Director, Aberdeen Heat & Power

We were pleased to see that this letter included the wording:

"Finally, I want to urge the industry to resolve issues around outages. Over what may be a very difficult winter where people may have to stay at home for long periods it is essential that they can rely on their heating systems for comfort and hygiene.

"I welcome the industry standard of compensation after 24 hours of outage but I also call on industry to improve systems which are frequently not working for shorter periods of time. Such unpredictable systems can be as troublesome and difficult for residents as longer periods."

However, this has not yet been implemented.

Affordable heat

Another critical question for heat network users is pricing. Energy prices are rising with fossil fuel price fluctuations, and the additional costs of replacing the long established gas pipe network with sustainable alternatives are unavoidable. In this context, Heat Networks offer the potential to keep costs down. FPA's principle is, as always, that adequate heating

and power costs must be affordable, and we were thrilled to find a heat provider that is putting this principle into practice. Aberdeen Heat and Power takes account of the incomes of its residents, ensuring that the cost of heat and electricity does not exceed 10% of their expected disposable incomes - based on the state pension. Progress is now being made on extending this principle elsewhere. We are putting it forward as a key plank of District Heating regulation, including for supplies based on renewable or waste energy.

The principles we are working to establish in District Heating - beginning with affordability and accountability - will be invaluable in work on other forms of low carbon heat like heat pumps, and in fact must be applied to fossil fuel heating as well.

10. Pensioners press on

In January 2021, we joined forces with South East London Community Energy (SELCE) to speak at Lewisham Pensioners Forum Annual Health Fayre on 'How to Take Action on Fuel Poverty'.

Also this spring, FPA member and pensioner activist Ellen Lebethe spoke as a Housing Champion of Care and Repair at Decent Homes Workshop organised by Lewisham and Southwark Citizens Research Community (Spring 2021).

Our ongoing relationship with the National Pensioners Convention continues, especially through Ellen, who is NPC vice-chair. In August, Ruth spoke to the Housing Working Group of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) at the invitation of their chair, Tony O'Brien.

As this Annual Report is being prepared, we are planning, together with NPC London, to mark the annual release of "Excess winter deaths" statistics in November 2021, with a march and rally in Westminster.

"I am pleased to have worked closely with Fuel Poverty Action Group over the last few years. They have provided me and many others well researched information that has assisted National Pensioners Convention in its campaigns . I worked in the construction industry all my working life, and am well aware of the lack of regard it shows towards having fuel efficient quality homes. I am pleased to support your campaigning activities and urge others to do so."

Tony O'Brien, Chair, NPC Housing Working Party

11. International

FPA is very much a UK-based organisation.

Our relationship with EU institutions has come to an end with Brexit, but participation in the European coalition of groups doing work like our own - the Right to Energy Coalition - is still very informative and productive, we are told, on both sides. In December 2020, Alexa, Ruth and Ruaidhri led a successful workshop at the annual R2E forum on issues of pricing and our proposal of "Energy for All". This debate has continued, and indeed intensified, as energy prices have soared (see sections 3 and 4 of this Report). We have also discussed issues regarding disconnections, Covid-19 pandemic regulations, prepayment meters and more, on a one to one basis with organisations in Wallonia and Barcelona.

In November 2020, Ruaidhri gave a talk to FESTIVAL Y?!, a youth collective working for environmental and social justice in the Baltics, who wanted to know about fuel poverty, with a focus on the stigma. In March 2021, Ruth spoke about Energy for All at an event organised by the Engager network which is funded via the European Co-operation in Science and Technology (COST) scheme to develop an international community of researchers on energy poverty. In August 2021 Gianluca was interviewed by Lithuanian group Šiltnamis (Eng: "Greenhouse"), the interview will be used in an article on grassroots initiatives around the world.

In September 2021, Alexa joined a discussion facilitated by DiEM25 on the Green New Deal for Europe, which we contributed to in 2019, considering next steps, and ways to collaborate with the other 23 organisations involved.

Beyond Europe, we are acutely aware that it is the whole world that is in crisis. We invited our friend and supporter Asad Rehman to 'Making Green Come True' to help ensure that the measures we discussed for decreasing poverty and carbon emissions in the UK did not increase the already intolerable burdens on people still worse off in the Global South.

A new development this year has been engagement with the international media. In September 2020 we did an interview on retrofits with China Global Television Network (CGTN), which has 500 million viewers.

12. Fuel Poverty Action: finance report

2020/21

Despite our lack of core funding, we are keeping our heads above water, because the vast majority of our work is done on a voluntary basis by our members. This huge non-monetary donation has in fact increased greatly this year, as more people have got involved and those already active have increased their time commitment.

From December to August of this year we were able to pay a part-time worker - Maddy Winters - who has had a huge impact on the amount of work we've been able to do. Maddy will continue to work for FPA - thanks Maddy!

At the start of the year we had £7,388, we finished with £5,550

Spending

We spent £5,174. Of this amount £4,977 was worker wages, £108 was spent on a zoom account. The remaining money was spent on admin and venues. These costs were lower as a result of moving online.

Donations

Most of our income this year has come from private donations - £1,600. Just over £750 of this has been from donations made via our website either as 'friends of FPA' or one-off contributions. Maddy organised a fundraiser, raising over £200. We've also had some very generous private donations from Brenda

Boardman and the people of North Oxford (£490) and from a recipient of the Winter Fuel Payment.

We've received £700 consultancy fees from Platform London for work done by Alexa and Ruth as part of their London Leap project.

Outgoing	Amount in £
<i>Worker wages (approx. 10 hours/week since January at £15/hr)</i>	4,977
<i>Zoom</i>	108
<i>Venue hire (from previous year)</i>	60
<i>Admin</i>	13
<i>Google storage</i>	16
Total	£5,174

Income	Amount in £
Private or small donations	1,122
Large donations	1,100
Consultancy payment (Platform London)	700
Refunds (from card processor)	266
Expenses - FestivalY	148
Total	£3,337

13. At a glance

Consultation Responses

Government policy

FPA have been active on a policy level, which has included submitting numerous detailed responses to government consultations. These have ranged from considering how to improve energy efficiency in the Private Rented Sector, to questions on their plans for the integration - or rather, the disintegration - of the NHS.

Oct 2020

Response to the consultation on amendments to the Fire Safety Order 2005 in response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

Nov 2020

Response to BEIS Consultation on the Warm Home Discount Scheme 2021/22.
Heat Trust consultation on Metering, Billing and Guaranteed Service Payments.

Jan 2021

Response to government consultation re the Integrated Care System (ICS) legislation proposals.
Improving the energy performance of privately rented homes.

Sept 2021

Heat Trust Scheme Rules Modifications.

Media coverage

Media Coverage of Fuel Poverty Action increased this year.

2020

23 September: Interview on retrofits - *China Global Television Network (CGTN)* (500m users).

November: *Utility Week* reported on our letter to Minister Kwasi Kwarteng on how district heating users were "Left out in the cold - no protection for hundreds of thousands if their heating fails this winter"

25 November: [Salford Star](#) report: "Salford Cladding Issues Won't Be Sorted Until 2022 as Solicitors Move In", featuring our coming conference "Making Green Come True"

2 December: [Ecologist](#) article prefigures "Making Green Come True"

2021

12 January: [Salford Star](#): "Freezing Salford Tenants Stuck in Pendleton Blocks"

5 February: Ruth London interview on ITV's [Good Morning Britain](#) and [BBC News](#) talking about rise in price cap, also featured in [Energy Live News](#) "Industry responds to Ofgem's new price cap".

10 February: 1 hour feature on Resistance TV (Chris Williamson).

11 March: FPA quote in [Salford Star](#) re Mayor leaving out social housing in cladding demands to the government

3 April: [The Times](#) full page feature based on our dossier on district heating in Tower Hamlets including leaseholders and Peabody tenants.

3 April: [The Morning Star](#) feature on same. Headline: "Tenants forced to move out of 'affordable' housing units after being left in 'legal limbo' over expensive heating bills".

8 April: *The Star* (in Sheffield) quotes FPA in article on another District Heating network: "Community heating bills in Barnsley described as outrageous".

13 April: [Inside Housing](#) article on the Tower Hamlets Peabody tenants dilemma: Housing Association criticised after tenants overcharged for low carbon heating.

16 April: Also features in *Inside Housing's* "[weekly round-up](#) of the most important headlines for housing professionals".

April: Peabody district heating story in NEA members newsletter.

24 June: [Southwark News](#) "Rouel Road residents to get automatic compensation after months of heating outages" Quotes FPA.

13 July: Contributed to widely quoted [EFPC press release on fuel price increase](#).

6 August: big quote in [The Big Issue](#) article "Energy prices to throw half-million into 'devastating' poverty"

6 August: interviewed on Radio London and Sky News on same issue.

14 September: quoted in [Financial Times](#) re rising prices. Also provided briefing to *BBC You & Yours*.

16 September: quoted in [the Independent](#) re rising prices.

22 September: quoted in [the Independent](#) "No cost of living crisis, Boris Johnson insists, despite warning of 'toxic cocktail' of rising bills" and again in the Independent Quoted in [UKToday](#) news: Energy Prices Hit New Records As Charities Warn Of 'Heat Rationing'

21 September: FPA on [Woman's Hour](#) re effect of price cap increases on women, and children

22 September: Five minute interview on *Sky News*

22 September: Interview on *Good Morning TV*

Our social media profile also massively increased this year.

Support and collaboration

District Heating estates we've worked with:

Holly Lodge Estate, Camden
New Festival Quarter, Tower Hamlets
St Clements, Tower Hamlets
Churchill Gardens, Westminster
Southfleet, Camden
Brookes Court, Camden
St Silas Estate, Camden
Phoenix Works, Tower Hamlets
Cannon Road, Haringey
New South Quarter, Croydon
Fielders Crescent, Barking
Pembroke Park, Ruislip
MFN/Oval Quarter, Lambeth
Rouel Road, Bermondsey
Dighton Court, Southwark
Consort Estate, Southwark
Sylvan Grove, Southwark
Clarson Court, Deptford
Rose Tree Estate, Barnsley
Fitzwilliam Estate, Rotherham

We appreciate the substantial contributions of experts in the fields of energy, heating and housing, including:

Syed Ahmed, Director, Energy for London
Dr Brenda Boardman MBE
Matthew Conrad, Tenant Claim
Donal Brown, RetrofitWorks Ltd
Claire Eades and Pauline Saunders, CIVALLI (cavity wall insulation victims)
Mark Elton, Cowan Architects, (Passivhaus and cladding expert)
Gary Hatcher, General Manager, PowerNaturally (heat pumps installer)

Michael King, Co-convenor, UK District Energy Vanguards Network

Tony O'Brien, retired construction worker and trade unionist

Prof. Tom Woolley, architect, specialist in natural building materials

On the Energy for All project and issues of poverty and pricing, we have benefitted from consulting:

William Baker, Citizens Advice

Peter Smith, NEA (National Energy & Action)

Louise Sunderland (Regulatory Assistance Project)

We are active members of the following networks and coalitions, often contributing to their, discussions, manifestos, press releases, petitions and reports:

End Fuel Poverty Coalition

Radical Housing Network

Right to Energy Coalition

Organisations and networks we have worked with this year include:

Action on Empty Homes
Advice 4 Renters (Brent)
All African Women's Group
Aliança Contra La Pobresa Energètica
Biofuelwatch
CLADDAG (the disabled leaseholders action group)
Community Energy London
Coppermill Heights Residents Association (Hale Village, Tottenham)
Disabled People Against Cuts
Divas (women in District Heating)
E3G
Extinction Rebellion
Festival Y?!
Fossil Free London
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the Earth, Lambeth
Global Women's Strike
Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People
Green New Deal for Europe
Green New Deal UK
Homes for All
Insulate Britain
Just Space
Labour for a Green New Deal
Lambeth Pensioners Action Group
Lewisham Pensioners Forum
London Green Party
London Renters Union
London Tenants Federation
Malus Tenants and Residents Association and Salford high-rise residents
Myatts Field South Tenants and Residents Association
National Pensioners Convention (NPC)
New Festival Quarter Residents Association
Newham Trades Council
Nuevo Modelo Energético
Oval Quarter Residents Association
Pembroke Park Residents Association
Peabody residents at Phoenix Works, Tower Hamlets
PCS Union
Platform London
Possible.
Reclaim the Power
Repowering London
Réseau wallon pour l'accès durable à l'énergie (RWADE), Belgium
Right2Energy
Save Cressingham Gardens
SELCE (South East London Community Energy)
South West London Law Centre
Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations
Southwark Planning Network
Sustainable Hackney
Tax Justice UK
Tower Blocks UK
TUC LESE (London East and South East) Pensioners' Network
Unite (Housing Workers Branch)
WinVisible (women with visible and invisible disabilities)

The Core Team

Over the past year our volunteer work team has included the following people who have offered their time and commitment on a long-term basis. Many others have been involved in the work more recently, or sporadically.

Ruth London, founding member of FPA, formed in 2011. A grandmother, active for five decades organising against poverty, discrimination and climate change, and against rape, she co-ordinates FPA's work. (Director)

Diane Skidmore, joined FPA 2012. She is 70, mother of six, grandmother, activist, council tenant for 30 years; home-educated last four children so also educated many others on her estate. A retired NHS health trainer, she still works to support healthy living and well-being. (Director)

Frances Sleap has been involved with FPA since 2012. She teaches Philosophy and Theology to sixth form students, and can sometimes bring her concerns with peace building and climate change to work. She is very concerned about fracking and likes to support local campaigns. Her son Daniel will be two years old this winter solstice. (Director)

Ellen Lebethe started liaising with FPA around 2014 on actions exposing the scandal of "excess winter deaths". With a long history of struggles in the UK and in South Africa, she is chair of Lambeth Pensioners Action Group and Vice-chair of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC). She is also a member of the NPC London Region and the NPC Women's Working groups and chairs the NPC Minority Elders group. Since 2019 she has formally served as the NPC liaison with FPA.

Steve Burak In FPA since 2014, has also been active in Climate Camp, Occupy LSX, Rising Up, Extinction Rebellion, social housing groups, anti-racist and equality organisations - committed to a broad spectrum of the problems needing resolution. He often feeds in news from the many climate or housing-related meetings and demonstrations he takes part in.

Philip McMahon joined in 2017. He's a web developer at The Guardian newspaper. Outside of FPA, he's been active with Campaign Against Arms Trade for several years. He thinks retrofitting the UK's housing stock is an easy obvious win against climate change. (Director)

Alexa Waud joined FPA in 2018 and hit the ground running with the SCIN campaign. She has wide experience with climate justice campaigns, and works as a researcher, helping to gather experience and views from people in a wide range of situations, e.g. at Climate Assemblies. (Director)

Gianluca Cavallaro-Ng joined FPA in 2018. He is 23 and is involved in various social justice and environmental campaigns. He has a background in environmental policy and wants an end to fuel poverty and climate change. He's been doing organisational, and international, work in FPA. (Director)

Rebecca Turner joined FPA in January 2019. She has a background in architecture and cares deeply about ways in which the climate crisis affects people's lives be that through displacement, fuel poverty, access to safe/affordable housing and non-toxic building materials.

Rhiannon Hughes worked with FPA for two years as campaigns and research officer for Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations, and gradually got more involved, joining the team last year. Her focuses are housing and heating and ensuring that people can get through the winter. She now works for South West London Law Centre.

Ruaidhri Carroll joined in 2019, and worked on the climate mobilisations and the cladding demonstration that autumn, and later admin work and speaking. He is active in the Labour Party.

Frances Lobel works with Repowering London and has closely studied what protections there are -- or could be -- for people who cannot afford to pay their bills or top up their meters. She is looking at the prohibition of domestic water supply disconnections, to consolidate arguments for a similar prohibition in the energy sector. She joined the crew in 2020.

Graeme Langton lives in a Salford tower block and has fought hard for fire safety, care for residents' mental health, and many other pressing issues on his estate. Working with us for several years, he finally joined FPA and contributes his experience and priorities to others.

Maddy Winters joined FPA in January 2021 as a paid worker, primarily working on district heating and FPA's day to day operations. Maddy is a disabled climate activist who experienced a decade-long struggle with cold homes.

Joana Westphal joined FPA in October 2020 and has since been supporting FPA with its work on district heating, the Making Green Come True conference and is interested in improving insulation to make homes warmer.

Appendix 1

Southwark heat network users: out of pocket and cold

In the London borough of Southwark, Fuel Poverty Action has been supporting residents of blocks with poor-quality District Heating, working very closely with Southwark Group of Tenants Organisation. Our member Rhiannon Hughes, recently of SGTO, drafted the following report:

Around 17,000 properties in Southwark are on district heating systems. Some estates have had repeating long lasting outages without any direct support. Estates like the Rouel Road estate have had regular outages of heating and hot water for years. This leaves elderly and sick tenants sleeping in winter coats to try and keep warm. This is life threatening. I was shocked that there was no door knocking from the local politicians to check on tenants during these known outages. Whilst Covid-19 could be cited as a reason for lack of door knocking and face to face engagement, there was canvassing for the general elections from the local politicians on the estate at the same time - with no questions asked about heating and hot water not working. It is sad that collectively we are not outraged when tenants are freezing and their properties are causing them harm. FPA with tenants and SGTO got this covered in Inside Housing in February 2021: [Inside Housing - News - London council tenants demand compensation after](#)

[being left without heating over winter.](#)

For the past three years SGTO and FPA have been campaigning with tenants that compensation should be automatic. Southwark Council as a landlord knew this was the correct way to support tenants who were paying for a service that they were not receiving. We outlined in many reports that compensation should not go onto rent accounts as tenants who owe rent or who are on Universal Credit where rent is paid in arrears may have their rebate swallowed. We also felt it created an additional barrier to accessing the funds. We were pleased to see after three years an updated policy being 'nearly available' it was published by Southwark Council but were disappointed to see payments going on to rent accounts. You can read why we were concerned here:

[Rouel Road: Bermondsey estate residents to get automatic compensation after months of heating outages - Southwark News](#)

It is really sad to see that properties are in such poor condition and that people are paying for homes that do not meet a suitable standard. People have lived in, moved into and even bought properties that they are stuck in that have no constant heating and hot water. The Government needs to release funds to local authority landlords so they can improve their housing stock. This should not be a lottery of which social landlords receive

it, any social landlord that has housing stock needing improvements should have the finance to do it.

The sessions that FPA set up with BEIS created a direct line with central government to raise issues with a strategic government body and we hope the government is listening.

I was previously the Campaign and Research Officer for Southwark Group of Tenant Organisations (SGTO) a surviving housing federation which represents many Southwark Council tenants. SGTO continues to strive and is made up of many powerful tenants. I have now joined South West London Law Centres (SWLLC) to lead their community engagement work. I know from door knocking and speaking to members of the community that fuel poverty is not limited to Southwark. Bad housing, low wages, under inflated welfare benefits and being forced into debt affect tenants and people everywhere. People are now receiving letters informing them that their already high fuel is going up. People can not meet the unnecessary prices. Fuel justice will remain a core part of my work at South West London Law Centre.

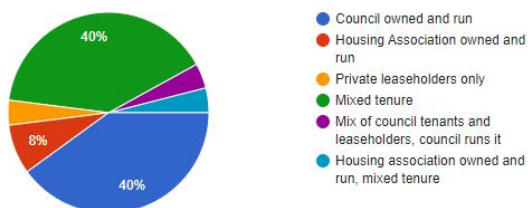
If you live in south west London to have a discussion about this you can contact rhiannon.hughes@swllc.org

Appendix 2

District Heating data gathering survey results

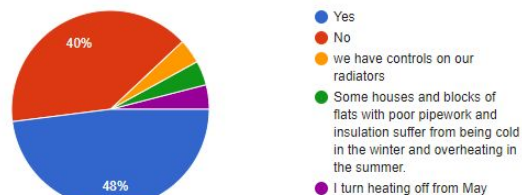
Which best describes your estate/development?

25 responses



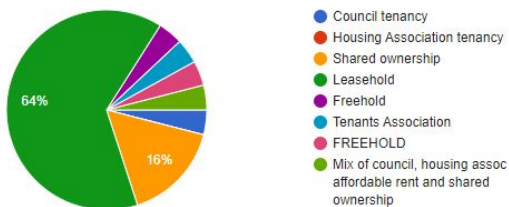
Is your housing overheated in the summer?

25 responses



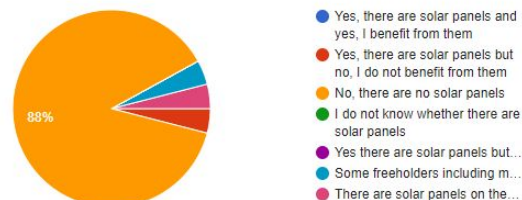
Your tenure

25 responses



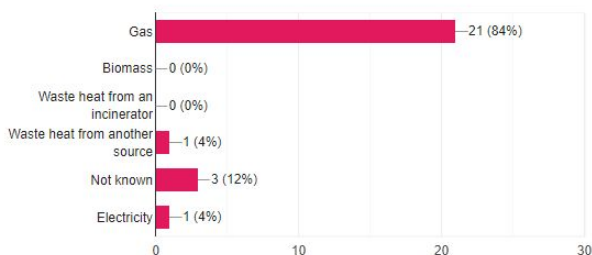
Are there solar panels on your estate or development? If so, do you directly benefit from them?

25 responses



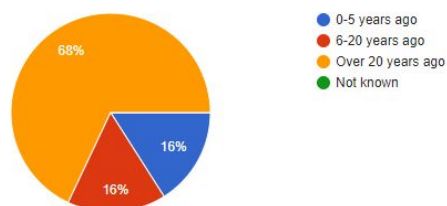
What fuel or heat source is used to produce heat for your heat network (answer one or more)

25 responses



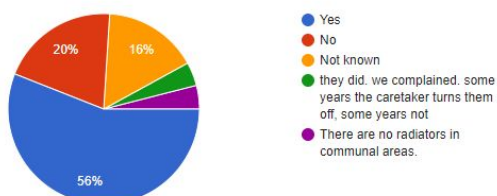
When was your home built?

25 responses



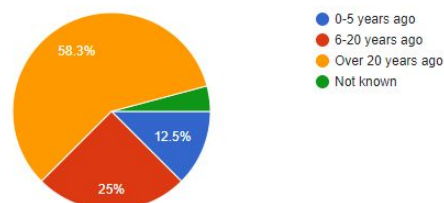
Do pipes and/or radiators in communal areas stay on all year?

25 responses



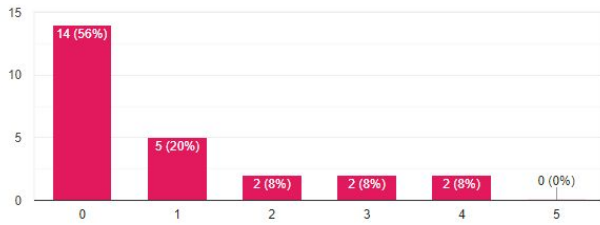
When was your heat network built/ your home connected to a heat network?

24 responses



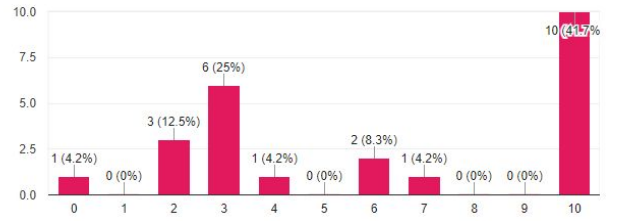
How would you rate the customer service and accountability of your heat provider?

25 responses



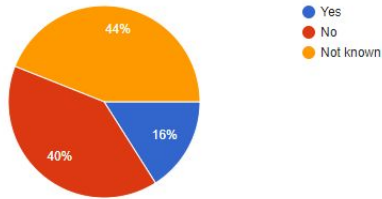
How many breakdowns of heat/hot water have you had in the last year?

24 responses



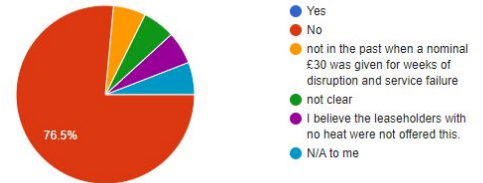
Is your heat network a member of the Heat Trust?

25 responses



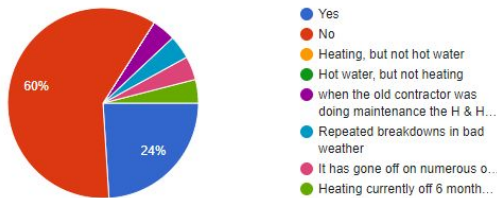
Were you offered money to help cover the additional electric costs of running a space heater or heating water electrically?

17 responses



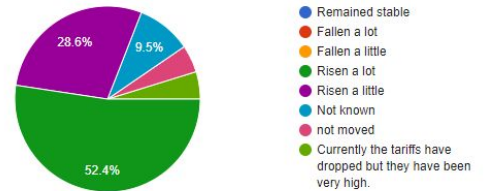
Do you have a reliable supply of heat and hot water?

25 responses



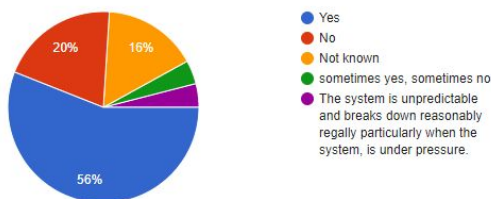
If you moved to your present property in the past 10 years, over time have your heating costs:

21 responses



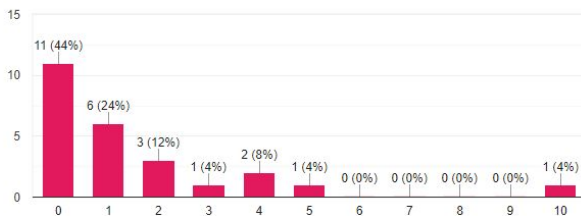
When the heating is working at its best, are space and water heating sufficient for all flats, as far as you know?

25 responses



How many breakdowns of heat/hot water have you had in the last month?

25 responses



FUEL POVERTY ACTION

*Annual Report produced with the help of Rhiannon
Hughes, Ruth London, Phil McMahon, Gianluca
Cavallaro-Ng, Alexa Waud, Joana Westphal, Maddy
Winters, and Madeleine Lynch.*