

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department for Communities

ANNOUNCEMENT OF PUBLICATION OF WARM HEALTHY HOMES STRATEGY

Published on Thursday 5 February 2026.

Mr Lyons (The Minister for Communities): I wish to inform members that I am publishing the “Warm Healthy Homes 2026-36: A new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland” today.

The Strategy sets out a long-term, cross-government approach to lift households out of fuel poverty and ensure that everyone in Northern Ireland can live in a warm, healthy home.

Fuel poverty affects close to one quarter of households here. It is not just an energy issue; it is also a health and economic issue.

Its consequences, cold and damp homes, are linked to poorer physical and mental health, increased stress and reduced wellbeing.

Behind the statistics are real people, families forced to choose between heating and eating, older people living in poorly heated homes, and children whose health and education are affected by damp, cold conditions.

The new Executive Warm Healthy Homes Strategy provides a clear pathway now and for future generations, to improved energy efficiency, protection of consumers and support for people with trusted advice and emergency help.

Its actions, joined up across government and with partners, will improve health outcomes, reduce pressure on health services and cut household energy bills.

This Strategy builds on firm foundations.

It complements and aligns with a suite of key Executive strategies that I have brought forward, including the Housing Supply Strategy and draft Anti-Poverty Strategy.

I am determined that, together, they will provide a powerful catalyst for positive change for households experiencing fuel poverty.

You will know that this is an enduring commitment of mine. I ensured a support payment to eligible pensioner households following the removal of the Winter Fuel Payment in 2024 and acted to secure its re-introduction last year.

My Department’s continued roll-out of the Housing Supply Strategy will see the increase in supply of better quality and more energy efficient homes. A new Decent Homes Standard, which is currently out for consultation, will enhance the quality, comfort and sustainability of social housing.

The Affordable Warmth Scheme has already improved more than 30,000 homes, enhancing energy efficiency for low-income households.

This Strategy brings these strands together along with new policy priorities to set strategic direction and ambition across government.

While developed for Northern Ireland, the Strategy reflects the priorities of the new Warm Homes Plan recently announced by the UK Government, including the importance of tackling fuel poverty through more energy efficient homes and improving health outcomes that will ease pressure on public services.

My vision is: “a warm, healthy home for everyone in Northern Ireland”.

Delivery will be guided by four principles:

- long-term, sustainable solutions;
- a needs-based approach;
- collaboration;
- and participation.

The Strategy is designed to get the right help to the right people at the right time, with a clear emphasis on fairness and need.

It sets out a series of commitments. Over the next 10 years we will:

- make homes more energy efficient, strengthen consumer protections, consider energy affordability and build capacity through trusted advice and timely emergency support.
- Strengthen referral pathways, improve data-sharing and build capacity among trusted partners so that people seeking help are signposted to all available support.
- Track progress through a transparent monitoring framework. We will measure not only fuel poverty but also its impacts on health and wellbeing, the energy efficiency of homes, energy costs, whether people are going without to pay their energy bills and how well they can access effective, trusted sources of energy advice.
- Be transparent about progress, listen to those with lived experience, and use more and better data to ensure continuous improvement, in partnership with stakeholders across and beyond government.

A central feature of the Strategy is the new Warm Healthy Homes Fund, launching in March next year. This flagship scheme will provide grants for energy-efficiency improvements for those most in need, taking a whole-house approach that integrates insulation, heating upgrades, ventilation and tailored advice. By reducing energy demand at source, this will deliver permanent reductions in household energy costs.

The Fund will need £150 million of energy-efficiency investment over its first five years and I will be seeking Executive support for this funding.

This investment represents a long-term, sustainable route out of fuel poverty by making homes easier and more affordable to heat.

We heard throughout our consultation process of the importance of housing standards in improving housing quality, and in particular the concerns of those in private rented accommodation. We will therefore raise housing standards, including minimum energy-efficiency standards in this sector, alongside improved enforcement.

People have asked for better, more accessible energy advice. We will expand access to trusted advice and emergency support, particularly for low-income households, strengthen consumer protections and quality standards, and ensure that every intervention is of good quality, delivers lasting benefits and builds confidence.

The Strategy represents strong value for money, generating long term savings for households, reducing pressure on public services and lowering the need for future emergency energy bill support.

The Strategy reflects one of the most extensive engagement exercises undertaken by my Department. It has benefited from the contributions of a broad range of organisations and individuals who know what it means to struggle to pay energy bills and by the organisations that support them.

We listened to people experiencing cold homes and to those working on the front-line including communities, councils, health professionals, advice networks, the energy sector and the voluntary and community sector. We also worked with other Government Departments, the Consumer Council, the Housing Executive and the Utility Regulator.

I am pleased to see the broad support from our partners and those who have participated in the consultation. I wish to put on record my thanks to all those who have contributed to this important work and I look forward to continued collaboration over the next decade. This will include:

- Public consultation on key schemes, notably the Warm Healthy Homes Fund,
- Ongoing partnership to support local solutions and joined-up policy-making across government; and
- Establishment of a Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel to provide constructive challenge and support.

I will report annually to the Assembly on progress against these measures and the actions that we have taken via a Ministerial statement.

I look forward to working with Executive colleagues and members to deliver our shared strategic vision of a warm healthy home for everyone.