



NEA NEWS RELEASE

Date: 4th February 2010
Embargo: Immediate Release
Press Enquiries: Lesley Tudor-Snodin, Press Officer at NEA on 0191 261 5677 or e-mail lesley.tudor-snodin@nea.org.uk

Alan Simpson MP supports Fuel Poverty Awareness Day

Alan Simpson MP is the Chair of the Parliamentary Warm Homes Group and is supporting Fuel Poverty Awareness Day 2010 a national campaign which aims to highlight the effects of living in a cold home on people's health.

Fuel Poverty Awareness Day, run by National Energy Action (NEA) and sponsored by EDF Energy, takes place on 12th February and has received backing from high profile health professional Dr Miriam Stoppard and Government's Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson.

Having just experienced the most severe winter in over 30 years, the campaign aims to draw attention to the health problems caused by living in a cold, damp home and urges vulnerable people to keep their heating on until winter ends and temperatures start to warm up.

Last winter temperatures remained as low as minus 6 degrees well into March, leading to concerns that people may have been risking their health by turning their heating off too early in order to save money on their fuel bills.

[NAME] Member of Parliament for [CONSTITUENCY], said, "Living in a cold damp home can lead to extremely poor health, especially in those who are vulnerable such as older people, young children whose immune system has not yet fully developed and those with long terms sickness and disabilities.

"It is important that people know that there are schemes in place to help them, and to ensure they are keeping warm and healthy throughout the winter period and for as long as the cold weather lasts. Fuel Poverty Awareness day is about acknowledging the issues, helping people to understand the links between fuel poverty and poor health, and making them aware of the help that is available to ensure they are kept warm and well.

"The most important message is that there is help out there for vulnerable households. I urge everyone who is concerned about their fuel bill to contact their energy supplier or to call the Home Heat Helpline on **0800 33 66 99** to access help and advice on staying warm when it is cold without the fear of fuel debt and ill health."

ENDS



Notes to Editors

1. Fuel Poverty Awareness Day, sponsored by EDF Energy, takes place on 12th February 2010 and aims to raise awareness of the issue of health and cold weather and point people to places where they can get help and support
2. Excess winter mortality is calculated as winter deaths (deaths occurring through December to March) minus the average of non-winter deaths (April to July of the current year and August to November of the previous year).
3. The Home Heat Helpline is a free, not for profit phone line set up to help British energy customers who are struggling to pay their fuel bill and keep warm. The Home Heat Helpline was launched by the Energy Retail Association in October 2005 and has become a cornerstone service for low-income households in urgent need of heating help and advice.
4. Cold and damp homes affect people's health and wellbeing and are linked to serious cardiovascular and respiratory illnesses. The elderly, young children and people with people with disabilities are particularly at risk. There were over 40,000 excess winter deaths linked to cold homes in 2008-09 in the UK.
5. Fuel Poverty is defined as the need to spend over 10% of household income on fuel costs to maintain adequate warmth for health and comfort.
6. NEA is the leading Fuel Poverty charity campaigning for affordable warmth in the homes of vulnerable people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For further details visit <http://www.nea.org.uk>
7. Current grant programmes are Warm Front in England (0800 408 2095) <http://www.warmfront.co.uk/> . The Energy Assistance Package in Scotland (0800 512 012) www.energyassistancepackage.com. The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) in Wales (0800 316 2815) <http://www.heeswales.co.uk/>