

Local Government and Communities Committee

Fuel Poverty (Target, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Bill

Supplementary Written Submission from Energy Action Scotland

Dear Mr McGrath

At the evidence session on Wednesday 21 November I agreed to send further thoughts on the examples I gave in answering Mr Wightman in identifying fuel poor households in local areas.

I noted that the Scottish house condition survey was a useful tool in measuring levels of fuel poverty in Scotland and it is indeed how the Government measure levels of fuel poverty year on year. However it can only give an indicator of levels of fuel poverty at a very high level that is to say by local authority area, there is a local authority analysis published

at <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SHCS/keyanalyses/LAtables2016> that gives a great deal of information on both the levels of insulation of homes and the number / percentage of homes living in fuel poverty. It does not as I said go down to a lower level of detail. What I had suggested was that by using this data and adding to it, then a more detailed fuel poverty map can be provided down to ward level for each local authority.

Using some data domains from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, although not in its entirety as it is not always a good indicator of fuel poverty alone combines with other data sets for example the census then such a fuel poverty map can be built up.

Members of the committee will have been aware that the latest Scottish House Condition Survey was published on 4 December 2018 and showed that while levels of fuel poverty in Scotland had dropped slightly there were increases in those households using oil as their primary heating with fuel poverty rates of 40% estimated to be in fuel poverty in 2017, up from 26% in 2016. Oil is more commonly used in rural areas than urban and therefore this has contributed to the fuel poverty rate in rural areas remaining at 43% in 2017 (not significantly different from the 37% recorded in 2016). This gives an example of the point that I made around the calculation of fuel costs in the BREDDEM model which uses a Scottish average and is not per local authority or postcode area, and is based on a three year average.

Therefore relying on the Scottish House Condition Survey alone to either provide sufficient data to use as a door step tool to calculate if a household is in fuel poverty or not or using the local authority data to target fuel poor areas is not a workable option without additional data being added.

This was the reason I noted that a door step tool would be exceptional difficult to provide and why it was likely that proxies would need to be continued to be used.

Norman Kerr
Energy Action Scotland