

Expert urges government to consider 'fuel-poor' households

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A University of Manchester academic is urging the Government to think about additional ways of helping the fuel poor.

Professor Stefan Bouzarovski says policy makers need to develop a more concerted and strategic approach towards the issue affecting households needing to spend more than 10% of their income on [energy](#) services.

According to The Department for Energy and [Climate Change](#) (DECC), there were 4.5 million people in fuel poverty in 2011, a fall of 250,000 on the previous year.

But those in fuel poverty would now need an average of £448 more a year, in order to heat their homes properly – an increase of £26 on 2012.

Professor Bouzarovski said: " Over the past six months, there has effectively been a complete withdrawal of state funding for fuel poverty programmes.

"A recent report by the Association for the Conservation of Energy says that total funds estimated to reach the fuel poor are expected to decline by 44 per cent, from £376 million in 2009 to £209 million in 2013.

"In essence, we have seen the privatisation of [energy efficiency](#) and fuel poverty policy, so that is no longer funded via general taxation, but rather through an indirect levy on [energy bills](#)."

Professor Bouzarovski's call comes as The University of Manchester hosts an international conference on the spatial, social and environmental dimensions of energy vulnerability.

The event, which is supported by the Meeting Place of the UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC), will run from midday on the 21 May until midday on the 23 May. More than 60 participants from across the UK and Europe are expected to attend.

He added: "Government policy makers do not seem to be aware of the need to improve the domestic energy services or efficiency circumstances of groups that were 'hard to reach' in the past.

"These are people living in the private rented sector or multiple occupancy housing, particularly leasehold flats as well as ethnic minority and 'non-traditional' flat-sharer households."

Provided by University of Manchester

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