

## ***Impact Case Study***

### **UoA 4: Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience**

#### **Fuel Poverty**

##### **Summary**

Fuel poverty occurs when a household cannot afford to heat their home to the standard that the World Health Organization (WHO) considers safe for human wellbeing.

The UK has some of the highest levels of fuel poverty worldwide, with Northern Ireland being amongst the worst affected. Work by Ulster University's Psychology Research Institute has helped shift focus on the issue from housing to human wellbeing, through the analysis of the physical and mental health benefits of tackling fuel poverty.

##### **Impacts**

This research has had far-reaching impacts, effectively shaping and changing policy at local council and national levels, and has been widely endorsed by senior politicians, policy-makers and charities. The research has played a pivotal role in developing new area-based targeting tools through which people in the most extreme forms of fuel poverty can be identified. Cost-benefit analyses have also demonstrated how better targeting can generate long-term benefits for people, and savings for government.

This programme of research has been recognised for its particular combination of high academic rigour matched with an unfailing commitment to the public good across a range of outputs:

##### **1. Policy**

- Recommendations for Department for Social Development (DSDNI) fuel poverty strategy in 2011, 'Warmer Healthier Homes', which had:
  - a stronger focus on the wellbeing benefits associated with tackling fuel poverty
  - a strategy title that emphasised health
  - an approach aimed at tackling, but also *preventing* fuel poverty.
- Recommendations for Department for Social Development (DSDNI) fuel poverty strategy in 2014, 'From Fuel Poverty to Affordable Warmth' which commits to targeting assistance towards those most in need. Targeting accuracy of Warm Homes installations has since improved by 50%.
- Developing a cost-benefit analysis tool, which has been cited by the Chief Medical Officer (England), the Northern Ireland Parliamentary Assembly, the Scottish Parliament, European Union, and National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

##### **2. Boosting local economies**

- Through partnership with DSDNI and 26 Councils in the past 2 years, local plumbers, heating engineers and boiler installers have worked in 3,000 homes of people in extreme fuel poverty, installing efficiency measures to the value of more than £250,000 in the first phases of the targeted rollout. Where households received the maximum package of feasible measures, the installations were able to remove them from fuel poverty.