

Aldersgate Group response: retrofitting our homes for a net zero future

November 2024

Background

The Aldersgate Group represents an alliance of major businesses, academic institutions and civil society organisations which drives action for a competitive and environmentally sustainable UK economy.¹ Our corporate members represent all major sectors of the economy, and include Associated British Ports, Aviva Investors, BT, CEMEX, the John Lewis Partnership, Johnson Matthey, Michelin, Nestlé, Siemens, SUEZ, Tesco, and Willmott Dixon. Aldersgate Group members believe that ambitious environmental policies make clear economic sense for the UK, and we work closely with members when developing our independent policy positions.

The Aldersgate Group submitted evidence to the Committee's inquiry *Heating our Homes*, available [here](#) in case of interest. The Committee, appointed following the 2024 General Election, held additional evidence sessions in December 2024. The Aldersgate Group welcomed the Committee's continued interest in the topic and submitted additional evidence, set out in the document, to highlight a particular gap in light of the new evidence sessions and recent policy developments.

Question

1. What factors are contributing to the under-delivery of government retrofit schemes?

Different factors are contributing to the under-delivery of government retrofit schemes, including policy and market uncertainty hampering investment to develop supply chains and training, skills shortages, and other barriers such as the planning system. A number of measures will be important to include in a wider policy package to ramp up towards the delivery of the Warm Homes Plan, improve building energy efficiency across the country and help address the cost of energy bills for households by reducing energy use. We welcomed the government's initial announcements regarding the Warm Homes Plan: they will provide clarity and support confidence building for the private sector to invest and scale up, alongside expected consultations on EPCs.

One particular measure that we are keen to bring to the attention of the Committee, and currently lacking government attention, is the need for an independent national expert retrofit advice service. Understanding of home energy efficiency and how to improve it is not widespread and the public can find information challenging to access. According to research by Santander UK, just 10% of UK adults said they felt they knew a lot about ways of improving energy efficiency, while 64% said they were unaware of their home's Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating.²

Navigating planning permission, finding reliable suppliers and installers, and understanding which measures are suitable for properties of different ages and EPC ratings, are all

¹ Individual recommendations cannot be attributed to any single member and the Aldersgate Group takes full responsibility for the views expressed.

² Santander (2024), [Tomorrow's homes](#).

technical and lengthy tasks which act as barriers to action. To support households to act, a national retrofit advice service is needed to provide clear, action-focused advice, tailored to each home on the most effective way to improve energy-efficiency and reduce energy bills.

Although national expert advice services exist in Wales and Scotland, there is no national provision in England. To ensure we decarbonise homes across the UK, England needs an overarching national expert advice service which delivers consistent outcomes across the country, integrating and enhancing local advice services wherever these are present and filling in significant gaps to end the advice postcode lottery.

Creating a national expert retrofit advice service for England would help to accelerate and derisk the delivery of the Warm Homes Plan, reduce energy bills and enhance consumer protection, and make Government money go further by referring eligible households into schemes – such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, or the Great British Insulation Scheme. An expert advice service is a key piece of infrastructure that will underpin the Government's commitment to upgrade five million homes over this Parliament.

An independent energy advice service would add to the wider support offered to households, with energy suppliers and other businesses playing an important role here. Advice from suppliers should continue to exist and will be more credible if overlaid with an independent trusted information platform.

Energy Saving Trust estimates that the cost of delivering the expert and specialist advice service for England would be £3–5 million per year for every 100,000 homes initially served by a digital front door (plus initial set-up costs).³ This cost estimate is highly dependent on how the advice service is structured. Additionally, to maximise the impact of an advice service, a national awareness campaign will be important to increase public awareness and instil confidence in households.

³ Energy Saving Trust (2024), [Warm Homes expert advice service for England](#).