Mark Pont, Assessment Programme Lead

Jessie Evans
Head of Profession for Statistics
Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy
(by email)

11 July 2022

Dear Jessie

Fuel Poverty statistics for England

We recently completed our compliance check of your Fuel Poverty statistics against the Code of Practice for Statistics. These are a valuable source for the UK Government in monitoring progress towards meeting its statutory target to reduce fuel poverty across England. With the recent increases to the fuel price cap, further rises expected, and concerns more generally around the cost of living, the topic of fuel poverty is receiving increased public attention.

Overall, our review found that the statistics produced, using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) metric that the UK Government uses as its target for England, comply with the Code and should continue to be designated as National Statistics. We detail some specific findings later in this letter. However, we also reflect that the measure may not resonate well with some people's understanding of fuel poverty, and the measures aren't timely enough to provide a valuable reflection of the effect of rising fuel prices for households during the current cost of living crisis.

While the decision to use the LILEE fuel poverty metric was made in 2021 following a government user consultation which included alternative options, and at that time the decision was made to not introduce any additional fuel poverty indicators in order to avoid any potential user confusion or to detract from the official LILEE metric, it's good that you are alert to the fact that some users are interested in different and more timely measures. Therefore, we welcome that your team mitigates this by publishing more up-to-date projections, and by undertaking work to address timeliness further (such as a joint project with the Data Science Campus at ONS) and by exploring the feasibility of using administrative data to deliver benefits such as more granular and timely data compared to using survey data and reduce burden on survey respondents. We appreciate that there are challenges to progressing this work due to resource constraints and welcome any steps taken to increase resources in this area.

Given the user interest in being able to compare fuel poverty across the UK, something not possible currently due to the UK countries having separate indicators (for example Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland use variations of a 10 per cent income indicator), we welcome the news that work is in progress within the Government Statistical Service on the

coherence of fuel poverty estimates across the UK (which BEIS is playing an active part in). We trust that any outcomes from this work will go some way to providing a more coherent and relevant picture of fuel poverty across the UK. It is helpful to users that information is provided within the Fuel Poverty statistics bulletin and accompanying methodology handbook on the different approach each UK country takes to measuring fuel poverty.

Our review found a range of positive features demonstrating the trustworthiness, quality, and value of the statistics as they are currently published.

- Your team's strong links with BEIS policy colleagues helps to ensure the relevance of the statistics to the UK Government's fuel poverty target. Additionally, the close working relationship with the English Housing Survey (EHS) team at the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (whose data are used in the Fuel Poverty estimates) and with the team at the Building Research Establishment responsible for modelling the fuel poverty estimates, helps to ensure the quality of the data.
- The statistical bulletin is well-structured with the key headlines upfront and provides detailed analysis behind the drivers of fuel poverty, with the latest release also including an annex setting out the impact of COVID-19 on the EHS. The bulletin is supported by a comprehensive methodology document providing details such as the quality assurance process and how missing data are dealt with, which helps users' understanding of them.
- The team demonstrates transparency in inviting user feedback on methodological changes such as recent changes to address the limitations of recording benefits information.
- The team has shown innovation through making use of [Reproducible Analytical Pipelines](#) (RAP) to streamline the production process which has resulted in being able to bring forward the release date by four months, with only the impact of COVID-19 preventing further time savings this year.
- The full fuel poverty dataset is made available to researchers through the [UK Data Service](#) to enable further re-use and analysis. For example the UK Data Service has published an [article](#) for Fuel Poverty awareness day.

We also identified ways in which the value of the statistics could be enhanced.

- The team should enhance the accessibility of the statistics so that they meet the UK Government [Accessibility Regulations](#). The [Government Analysis Function website](#) provides guidance and can offer support with accessibility and dissemination. My team has already provided detailed points to improve accessibility within the bulletin which will be important for you to reflect on.
- The team should consider how any uncertainty in the statistics is presented in the Fuel Poverty factsheet in a proportionate way. While the main statistical bulletin and accompanying Excel spreadsheets make it clear that the statistics are estimates of fuel poverty, some users may not refer to the bulletin and so may not realise that these are estimates.

I would like to thank your team for their positive engagement on this review. Our Transport, Environment and Climate Change Lead will continue to engage with you and your team on progress in the coming months. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss any aspects of this letter further.

I am copying this letter to Jane Chandler, Deputy Director Energy Statistics, Stephen Oxley, Head of Fuel Poverty Statistics, and Iain MacLeay, Senior Statistician for Household Energy Efficiency.

Yours sincerely

Mark Pont
Assessment Programme Lead