# MPs call for national Warm Homes Advice Service to tackle retrofit failures and skills crisis



The UK’s endeavour to decarbonise home heating is facing significant roadblocks due to inadequately designed retrofit schemes and a pressing skills crisis, as highlighted in a recent report from the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee. This parliamentary body has recommended the establishment of a national Warm Homes Advice Service, aimed at guiding consumers towards reliable advice, accredited installers, and financial assistance for retrofitting their homes. According to their findings, every £1 invested in this service could yield returns of £15, signifying the potential impact of well-structured support mechanisms.

The committee's report critiques the numerous "stop-start" funding initiatives launched by successive governments—identifying at least ten separate schemes since 2013. This fragmented approach has sown confusion among consumers, installers, and investors, hindering the necessary transformation of the market. Bill Esterson, chair of the committee, pointed out that the lack of sustained support has resulted in the UK lagging tragically; energy efficiency measures are installed at a staggering rate 98% below what was predicted in 2010.

Moreover, witness accounts highlighted in the report indicate that poorly executed retrofits have left many homes vulnerable, with early estimates suggesting that around 250,000 residences may become un-mortgageable due to problematic installations, such as spray foam insulation. To combat this issue, the committee has called for a national workforce accreditation scheme, ensuring that contractors undertaking home upgrades are sufficiently qualified, thus instilling consumer confidence through recognised industry standards.

Echoing the committee's concerns, Amanda Williams, head of environmental sustainability at the Chartered Institute of Building, urged for long-term policies that maintain a steady demand for retrofitting instead of relying on ephemeral schemes. "Our sector has well-documented skills and worker shortages," she noted, emphasising that stable policies are crucial for encouraging industry investment in training and development.

This dialogue on enhancing home heating efficiency has drawn attention from other bodies as well. Reports produced by the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee have underscored the urgency for clear strategic direction to achieve the UK's ambitious net-zero emissions target by 2050. These discussions frequently centre on diversifying approaches to heating, highlighting the vital role of low-carbon technologies such as heat pumps and networks to enable this transition.

In response to these recommendations, the UK Government has initiated efforts to improve consumer protections and bolster the transition to low-carbon heating. Collaborations with standards organisations such as the Microgeneration Certification Scheme aim to ensure that renewable technology installations uphold quality standards. Recently introduced digital tools also offer tailored advice to homeowners on energy efficiency, showcasing the government’s willingness to adapt and provide clear guidance.

However, critics argue that more needs to be done, particularly concerning the adequacy of financial incentives and the coherence of policy implementation. Past initiatives have been mired in bureaucratic inefficiencies, leading to the suspension of businesses that failed to meet standards and broad dissatisfaction among homeowners who struggled with subpar insulation work.

Overall, while the call for a comprehensive Warm Homes Advice Service and a robust accreditation scheme for contractors marks an essential step towards enhancing the UK's retrofit landscape, the ongoing discourse surrounding energy policy needs to align more closely with consumer needs and market realities to ultimately achieve long-term sustainability in home heating.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.building.co.uk/news/mps-call-for-retrofit-advice-service-and-accreditation-scheme-for-contractors/5136137.article)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.building.co.uk/news/mps-call-for-retrofit-advice-service-and-accreditation-scheme-for-contractors/5136137.article), [[4]](https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/664/energy-security-and-net-zero-committee/news/205118/retrofit-failures-how-do-we-move-forward-on-warm-homes/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmbeis/1038/report.html), [[3]](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-21/debates/225eff5f-430e-40ea-82d8-14ff8796ca35/WrittenStatements)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/committee-on-climate-change-2022-progress-report-government-response/responding-to-the-climate-change-committees-ccc-annual-progress-report-2022-recommendations), [[6]](https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7830/heating-our-homes/publications/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.building.co.uk/news/mps-call-for-retrofit-advice-service-and-accreditation-scheme-for-contractors/5136137.article), [[7]](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-01-13/debates/dd862baa-9ebf-44dd-8fb3-ec3d4699e7ca/GeneralCommittees)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.building.co.uk/news/mps-call-for-retrofit-advice-service-and-accreditation-scheme-for-contractors/5136137.article> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmbeis/1038/report.html> - The UK Parliament's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee published a report titled 'Decarbonising heat in homes' on 3 February 2022. The report examines the challenges and strategies for reducing carbon emissions from domestic heating, emphasizing the need for clear strategic direction and guidance to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. It discusses the importance of transitioning away from natural gas heating systems and highlights the necessity of a diverse range of low-carbon technologies, including heat pumps and heat networks, to effectively decarbonize domestic heating.
3. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2024-02-21/debates/225eff5f-430e-40ea-82d8-14ff8796ca35/WrittenStatements> - In a written statement dated 21 February 2024, the UK Government outlined its efforts to improve consumer protection and support the transition to low-carbon heating. The statement details collaborations with standards organizations like the Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) to ensure quality installations of renewable technologies. It also mentions updates to technical competencies for installers and reviews of authorization conditions to enhance compliance with building regulations. Additionally, the statement highlights initiatives to provide impartial advice and information to consumers, including digital tools and in-person advice pilots.
4. <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/664/energy-security-and-net-zero-committee/news/205118/retrofit-failures-how-do-we-move-forward-on-warm-homes/> - On 5 February 2025, the UK Parliament's Energy Security and Net Zero Committee addressed challenges in insulating and heating homes as part of the government's clean power 2030 plan. The committee discussed the £6.6 billion Warm Homes Plan, aiming to upgrade five million homes over five years with grants and low-interest loans for insulation and low-carbon heating. It also highlighted issues with previous government schemes, including poor-quality solid wall insulation installations, leading to suspensions of businesses and mandatory fixes without additional costs to households.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/committee-on-climate-change-2022-progress-report-government-response/responding-to-the-climate-change-committees-ccc-annual-progress-report-2022-recommendations> - The UK Government's response to the Climate Change Committee's 2022 Annual Progress Report, published on 29 July 2022, introduced a new digital service called 'find ways to save energy in your home.' This service offers impartial and tailored recommendations to consumers on improving home energy efficiency and installing greener measures. It provides links to existing government retrofit schemes and installers. The government also announced plans to launch a national phoneline service and regional in-person energy advice pilots to support consumers further.
6. <https://committees.parliament.uk/work/7830/heating-our-homes/publications/> - The UK Parliament's Energy Security and Net Zero Committee initiated an inquiry titled 'Heating our homes' to examine issues related to heating homes and managing energy bills. The inquiry focuses on energy efficiency, including insulation, heat pumps, and technologies that could replace gas boilers. It also addresses the need for new builds and renovated houses to meet decent heat standards, infrastructure challenges in delivering warm homes, and ensuring a skilled workforce is available when needed. The inquiry is no longer accepting evidence as of 25 August 2023.
7. <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2025-01-13/debates/dd862baa-9ebf-44dd-8fb3-ec3d4699e7ca/GeneralCommittees> - In a General Committee debate on 13 January 2025, the UK Government discussed measures to improve energy efficiency and support the transition to low-carbon heating. The government announced the development of new standards for minimum energy efficiency in the private and social rented sectors, aiming to lift one million people out of fuel poverty. Changes to planning restrictions, including the removal of the outdated 1-meter rule, were proposed to facilitate heat pump installations. The Boiler Upgrade Scheme was expanded, with the budget nearly doubling to £295 million for the next year, to support more heat pump installations.