

# Parliamentary Briefing: Government Support for the cost of heating oil – Westminster Hall Debate

April 2026

## Overview

- **More than 1 in 4 (28%) pensioners said they were struggling financially before war broke out in Iran – with energy being the main issue.** Findings from Age UK's representative national polling conducted in January indicates that cost of living pressures continue to persist among older people.
- **Across the UK, oil heating systems are in around 1.5 million homes**, with a high concentration found in rural areas across Great Britain and in Northern Ireland.
- Older people are more likely to live in properties heated by oil and recent reports suggest that prices for some have doubled or even tripled. **One in 20 (5%) of households headed by people aged 50 to 64 years and 1 in 25 (4%) headed by people aged 65+ have a solid fuel or oil-fired system.**
- **Households that are dependent on oil heated systems are not protected by a price cap** and are therefore more exposed to immediate energy price increases. Recent geopolitical events are already impacting some UK consumers with **the cost of heating oil having reached similar levels to those seen back in 2022.**
- The heating oil market is unregulated and lacks the sorts of consumer protections seen in other sectors of the energy market regulated by Ofgem. **This means there is no statutory advice provider, little consumer protection, and no affordability support scheme** such as the Warm Home Discount.

## What Age UK would like to see

Age UK's main concern is ensuring that older off-grid households get the help they need to manage the price increases they now face. With the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) currently investigating the heating oil market, we want it to recommend:

- **Ofgem be appointed the regulator for heating oil providers** and tasked with introducing regulations to **bring consumer protections for heating oil consumers in line with those that retail energy market consumers have.**
- **Creating a statutory advice provider for heating oil consumers**, so where independent & impartial advice is needed, it can be accessed.

- **Establishing an industry complaints process**, including the potential for complaints to be escalated to the energy ombudsman.
- **Developing an affordability support scheme that is there to support low-income consumers**, that aren't covered by schemes such as the Warm Home Discount, for years to come.

## Emerging issues for heating oil users

With the unregulated nature of the heating oil market and a lack of consumer protections, certain issues have begun to emerge for heating oil users, including:

- **Poor billing practice** – an increase in providers not providing price quotes when orders are placed, and when quotes are provided, the final price upon delivery can vary.
- **Absence of regard for vulnerability** – not prioritising supply for the most vulnerable consumers, particularly those with health issues, susceptible to cold homes.
- **No formal mechanism for complaints & recourse** – an absence of a clear pathway for consumers to report bad practice.

In the absence of appropriate consumer protections, heating oil users are and will continue to be exposed to these issues. The CMA is already investigating the market, and we hope will come to robust a set of recommendations as outlined above.

## Affordability of heating oil

**Age UK welcomes the Government's £53m support package for households using heating oil.** However, this support will not be enough for those facing immediate price hikes, many of which will be older people. Once that money is spent, heating oil consumers will also be left without a way of receiving support in the future.

Age UK has seen an increase in housing enquiries which include energy related queries. From December 2025 to February 2026, it's free Advice Line has seen a **36% spike in calls and since the start of the 2026**. Below are examples of energy related queries we've heard from older people.

### What older people have told us:

- An 80-year-old man living with serious health concerns needing to keep warm. He lives rurally and relies on oil to heat his home. He's explored alternative government schemes to no avail. In January, a full tank of oil cost him £400 and when he went to fill up again in March the cost was £800.
- An individual in their 70's dependent on heating oil last paid £293, now for the same amount the price has risen to £700.
- A couple in their 70s, one who has had a stroke and needs to be kept warm on oil heating, found the price they for oil go up from £300 to £700. They're struggling to keep up with all their bills going up.

### What can Parliamentarians do now?

We are asking Members to attend a **Westminster Hall Debate (15 April 2026)** on [Government support for the cost of heating oil](#) and raise the points outlined in this briefing.

If you have any questions or would like to meet to discuss the issues outlined in this briefing further, please contact [publicaffairs@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:publicaffairs@ageuk.org.uk).