Insulate to tackle fuel poverty, make homes healthier and reach net zero

Monday 29 September, 2025

Abandoning or deprioritising fabric improvements in government energy efficiency schemes in response to poor quality installations would be a mistake, according to a new report from INCA, the trade body representing the external wall insulation industry.

Increasingly loud voices argue that the urgent need for decarbonisation means that low carbon heating should be prioritised over interventions like insulation. But insulating a property properly not only reduces the carbon emissions associated with heating but also makes it healthier for its residents and reduces their energy bills. Tackling fuel poverty and unhealthy homes alongside carbon emissions will have the biggest social and economic benefits, worth billions of pounds over the coming decades.

The government has a number of opportunities to make this happen, including the forthcoming Warm Homes Plan, revised Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards and the next iteration of the ECO scheme. INCA today calls on ministers to ensure that money is focussed on high-quality installations, and to give industry the long term certainty it needs to invest in the skills and materials needed to upgrade Britain's unhealthy and poor quality housing stock.

INCA Executive Director John Sparrow said:

"When designing schemes which support retrofit, particularly for low income households, government should be considering a holistic approach which will have the widest impact and the largest payback. This means continuing to prioritise investment in fabric upgrades alongside clean heating."

"Authorities such as the Committee on Fuel Poverty and Climate Change Committee, as well as the government departments which oversee energy and housing, agree that insulation has the greatest cost saving impact on fuel bills of all energy efficiency measures."

"The government's own research finds that the most effective single retrofit measure for improving a building's energy efficiency is properly installed solid wall insulation, especially when installed alongside measures like heat pumps and solar panels."

"Reputable manufacturers and installers are deeply disappointed by the poor quality of some recent work done under ECO4, and share the desire of government to ensure that this cannot happen again. INCA members are not among the companies which have been sanctioned, and we believe that our stringent membership requirements can help drive up standards across the industry."

ENDS

The full INCA report can be found at:

https://www.inca-ltd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Why-Fabric-First-Is-Right.pdf

For further details contact info@inca-ltd.org.uk or by phone 0330 124 6585

Notes to Editors

In June 2025, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's Demonstration of Energy Efficiency Potential (DEEP) study
concluded that "SWI is therefore the most impactful measure and saves more energy than all other measures combined."[1]

INCA is the recognised trade association for the External Wall Insulation (EWI) industry, representing the major system designers, a nationwide network of specialist installers along with key component suppliers and service providers to the EWI industry.

[1]

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