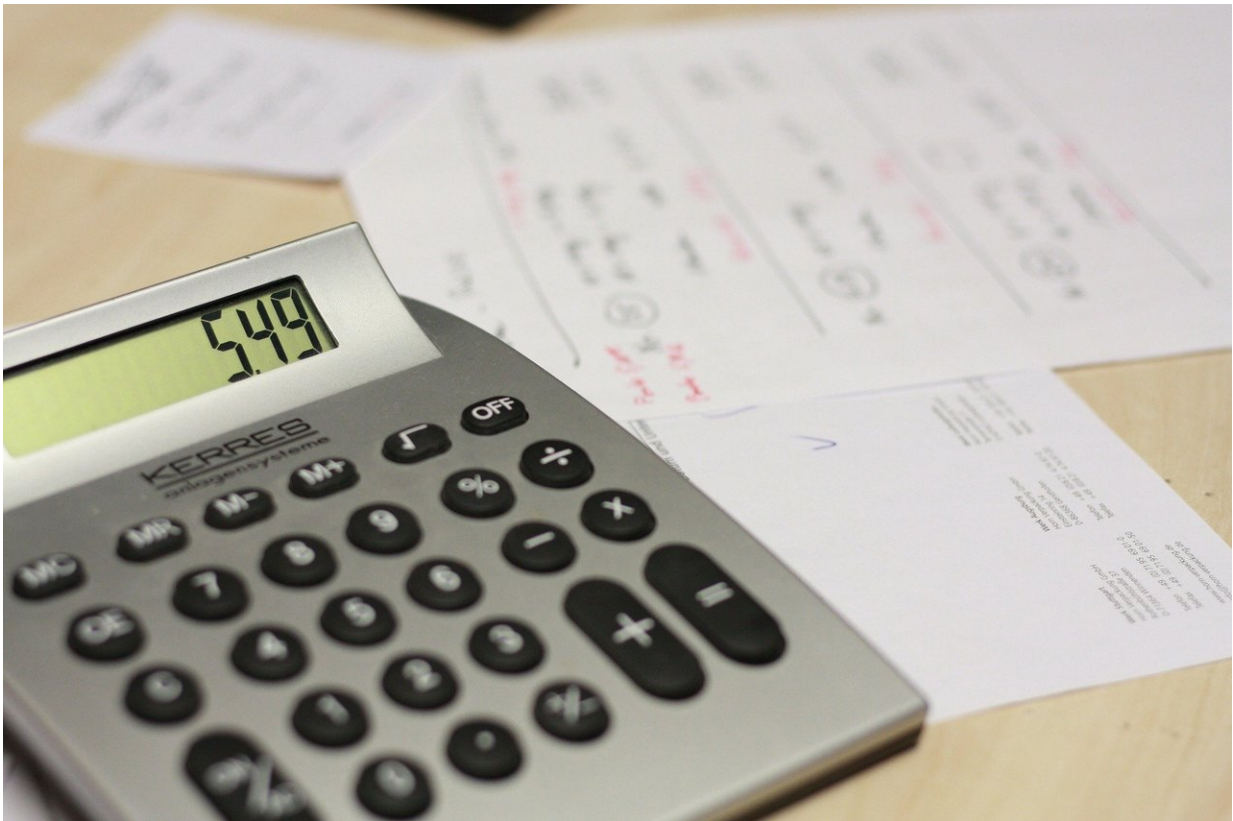


UK could face public health 'crisis' from energy bill hike

August 19 2022, by SYLVIA HUI



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Britain's public health leaders appealed to the government on Friday to urgently tackle soaring energy prices, warning that the steep rise in household bills will lead to more people falling sick and increase the

number of annual deaths linked with cold homes.

In a letter sent to [government](#) officials, the National Health Service Confederation said surging costs mean many people will have to choose between skipping meals to heat their homes or living in cold and damp conditions this winter.

The group's chief executive Matthew Taylor said [health](#) leaders took the step to make an "unprecedented intervention" and write to the government because the U.K. was "facing a humanitarian crisis" due to the public health risks linked to rising [fuel costs](#).

The average U.K. household fuel bill has risen more than 50% so far in 2022 as Russia's war in Ukraine squeezes global oil and natural gas supplies. A further increase is due in October, when the average [bill](#) is forecast to hit 3,500 pounds (\$4,300) a year. Official figures this week showed that U.K. inflation hit a new 40-year high of 10.1% in July.

Taylor said inability to heat homes and afford food will "lead to outbreaks of illness and sickness around the country and widen health inequalities, worsen children's life chances, and leave an indelible scar on local communities."

He warned that this will compound pressure on hospitals and [public health services](#), which are already under stress and are bracing for a difficult winter.

"Health leaders are clear that, unless urgent action is taken by the government, this will cause a public health emergency," he said.

The government has faced widespread calls to freeze bills or help people with their finances, but ministers have said no action will be taken until the Conservative Party selects a new prime minister to replace Boris

Johnson. The winner of the Conservative leadership contest will be announced on Sept. 5.

Authorities say they have set aside billions of pounds to support people in need with state subsidies. Most households will also receive 400 pounds (\$474) over the winter to help with energy bills.

The NHS Confederation said this is not enough and more needs to be done to help those who cannot cope with energy bills rising by some 80%.

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