

Calls for Government to help families meet rising bills

'Heat & Eat - fight the cost of living crisis' is our newly-launched community campaign for a better tomorrow for our audience. The crusade, following recent JPIMedia Keep Us Warm This Winter drive that won support from opposition leader Keir Starmer among others, highlights current heating or eating dilemmas, why such cash-strapped cost of living choices arose and what solutions can now best address issues involved.



COVID AND its consequences have been the biggest threat to the nation over the past few years but in 2022 a cost of living crisis is set to be just as frightening for many families.

PM Boris Johnson is coming under increasing pressure to sort out rising inflation, tax rises and heating bills that are putting family budgets under more strain than ever.

Many high profile figures are increasingly backing calls for the government to step in and sort things out.

Anti-poverty campaigner and Manchester United footballer Marcus Rashford has warned that as costs rise many families are facing a choice between "heating and eating".

He said: "You know, people in households are having to decide - it reminds me of my situation when I was younger, to be fair - you've got to decide between are you going to eat or are you going to be warm in the house?"

"And these are decisions that you don't want people to go through, never mind children, and, you know, there's other stuff - there's the price of fuel and electricity. The cost of living has definitely increased."

Others lending their voices to the call for government to do something include our own Going Green correspondent, green campaigner and consumer expert Angela Terry.

She said: "I really support JPIMedia's 'Heat & Eat - fight the cost of living crisis' campaign as many families are having to choose between paying for fuel or food."

"Global gas prices are spiraling, and as we import most of our gas from Qatar and Norway, this is why energy bills are increasing rapidly. The UK's reliance on polluting fossil fuels for heating is bad for our

economy, climate change and hard working families, which is why green alternatives will insulate us from future price shocks in the future.

"Firstly though we have to get through this current crisis so it's really important that schemes such as Eco and Warm Homes not only remain in place but are extended to provide financial support to people who need the most help. Removal of 5% VAT gives the most money back to the richest people in big households.

"But there are also measures people can take to insulate their homes that could save on average over £500 a year (25 per cent of their bills). Some of these measures such as 30cm of loft insulation, keeping temperatures to 19C and plugging drafts will all reduce your heating demand and therefore your bills.

"Even if you are in rented accommodation you can ask your letting agent to put these improvements in place but unfortunately they are under no obligation to do so unless your home has one of the lowest energy

performance records (EPC of an F or G). "Crucially we need to roll out green alternatives such as insulating our houses and air-source heat pumps. There is a grant of £5k starting in April for people who want to replace their gas boiler with a heat pump. The pot of money is tiny and there is no advice for the public to carry on low-carbon measures.

"Hopefully as energy prices go through the roof the Government will put in place measures required so we can all have affordable, secure and low-carbon energy because currently we are paying the real cost of having the leakiest housing stock in Western Europe."

Opposition leader Sir Keir



Families are struggling to make ends meet.

Starmer has also called on the government to do something to alleviate the crisis.

He said he felt it was important this winter that people don't see their energy prices going up.

He added: "Food prices have already gone up, tax is going to go up, lots of families on universal credit are going to struggle with the cuts the government is putting in place, so we mustn't allow fuel bills and energy bills to go up, it's a big chunk of people's income and what they spend out every month."



Labour leader Keir Starmer

Money-saving expert, Martin Lewis, has also asked for the

government to intervene

to alleviate the eat or heat dilemma.

He said 2022 was going to be "a very tough year for many people" and "substantial intervention" was needed by the government.

He said it needed to be looked at now to protect people between "heating and eating".



Manchester United and England star Marcus Rashford says many families face a choice between 'heating and eating'.