Dear [MP name],

I am writing on behalf of [housing association name] about the Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund and to ask for your support in getting the scheme reopened.

One of the most pressing issues facing our residents at the moment is the immediate financial challenges they face as a result of the rise in energy prices. They are not connected to the mains electricity or gas grid, instead receiving their heat via [insert method of heating e.g. heat networks], and so have not been protected by the Energy Price Cap. They were also not eligible for the Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) when it was initially announced in February 2022. Our residents are on lower incomes thus are unlikely to be able to afford to pay the high amounts for their heating and hot water which we have seen over this last Winter as a result of the gas price crisis without the necessary support.

The Energy Bills Support Scheme Alternative Fund provided the £400 to customers who did not receive the EBSS automatically via a discount on their energy bills, for example because they are on a heat network. The EBSS was provided to customers directly into their bank accounts in monthly instalments of £66 or £67 between October 2022 and March 2023. Customers who did not receive this automatically had to apply for the discount in order to receive it via the Alternative Fund. The application process for this opened on 27 February and closed on 31 May.

However, we had difficulties in ensuring all our eligible residents were able to apply for the discount before the deadline. In many cases, these residents are more vulnerable and were not aware of their entitlement to the fund. For example, [insert example here]. As a housing association, we provide the support and supervision required to help these residents live as independently as possible and therefore sat with each resident individually to support them through the application process. This meant going through hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of individual applications to ensure our residents received the financial support they are entitled to and need.

Uptake of the scheme has also been very low. As of 1 June 2023, a total of 203,580 applications had been made, with 124,830 of these having been paid. This is less than a quarter of the 900,000 households expected to be eligible, as stated in the original government advertisement for the fund, and highlights that a clearly communicated campaign ensuring all those eligible for the fund knew where and how to apply was strongly needed.

[Insert housing association name] would be very grateful for your support in raising this issue in Parliament and getting the fund reopened for applications. These customers should not be penalised for the way their home is heated, and it is only fair they receive the £400 energy bill discount that everyone in the country is entitled to, many of whom have already received it via other means.

If you would like to meet to discuss this issue further, please do share with me some dates and times when you would be available to meet and I will be in touch to coordinate this.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

[Insert name here]