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Fuel poverty – also known as energy poverty – is defined in the United Kingdom as the situation whereby low income households are required to pay high costs in order to achieve adequate levels of thermal comfort because their homes are inefficient. In the UK, government are legally obligated to eradicate fuel poverty in England by 2016. At present, policies for tackling fuel poverty are delivered both by government and – via legal obligations - by the largest six energy suppliers. However, the extent to which this current division of responsibility is appropriate to policy goals has not been a primary focus of research to date; this work looks to address that gap.

In this presentation, I will give an overview of the PhD research I have undertaken whilst in residence as a Research Fellow at the IAS-STS in Graz, Austria, which addresses the overarching research question, ‘What role is appropriate to the energy supplier in alleviating fuel poverty?’ This work has incorporated analysis of both policy documents and quantitative datasets in considering the implications of energy supplier involvement in delivering both economic and technical support to fuel poor households in the United Kingdom. I will conclude the presentation by discussing the implications of these findings for emerging energy poverty policy in Austria.