

THE MEMBERS MAGAZINE OF NEA, THE NATIONAL FUEL POVERTY AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY CHARITY

FUEL POVERTY FOCUS

AUTUMN 2021

03.12.21

SAVE THE DATE



**FUEL POVERTY
AWARENESS DAY**
3 DECEMBER 2021

NEA tribute to Sir David Amess MP

On behalf of our charity and our supporters, we would like to pay tribute to the life and career of Sir David Amess MP.

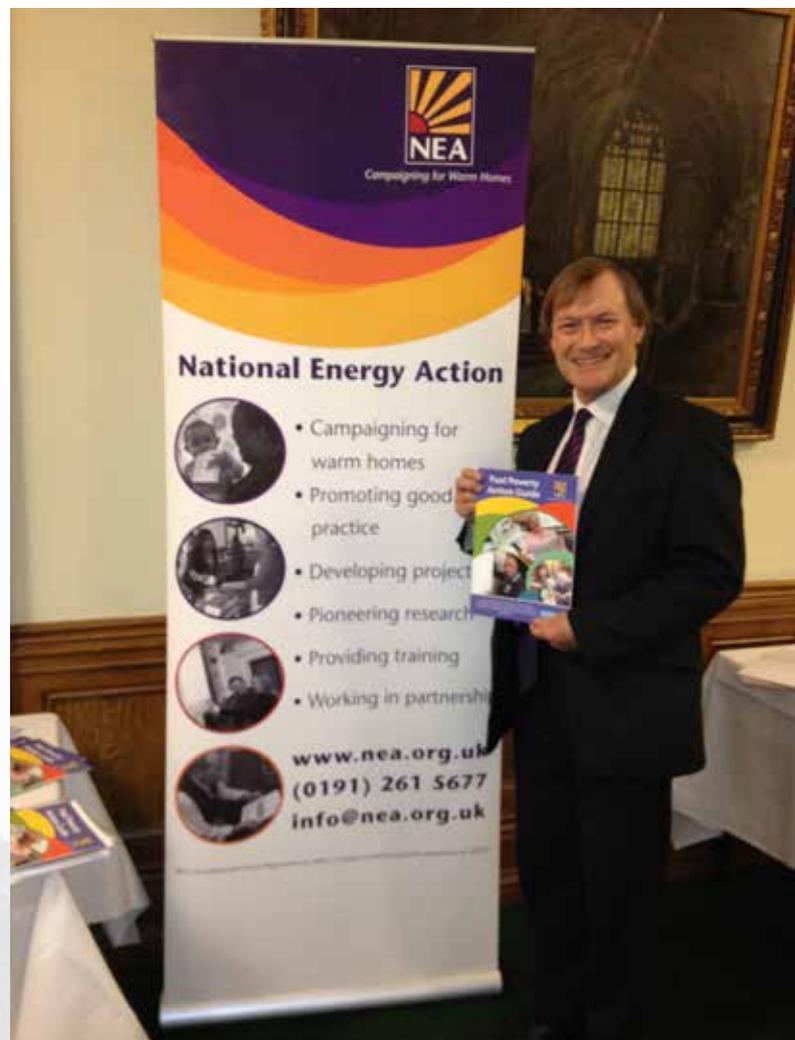
Since his untimely death, so many people have felt such raw affection for Sir David. It is now clear just how well loved, liked and respected he was across the political spectrum and in and outside of political life.

Anyone who met Sir David would be immediately aware of his charm, kindness and warmth. In his long career as a Member of Parliament from 1983, he was always actively involved in so many causes locally or nationally but always with a depth of knowledge which underlined his genuine interest and involvement. There are many different reasons why he is held in such high regard by anyone he met or worked with but for NEA and many of the people we work with to help end fuel poverty, he will always be remembered for his Private Member's Bill to eliminate fuel poverty which received Royal Assent in 2000 - the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act. As he recently highlighted to the House of Commons earlier this summer in the annual fuel poverty debate; ***"I was inspired by a Polish gentleman living in a high rise block of flats who died of fuel poverty"***. This was the type of person Sir David was. If he saw an injustice and a way to help, he would do it.

At a time when so many households are worried about soaring energy costs again this winter, it would be easy to feel Sir David's efforts on this front had been in vain. On the contrary, I hope he and his family take some small comfort from knowing the huge positive difference he has made. Millions of people across the UK are now better supported through national policies and programmes than before he started his campaign and he has directly helped millions of people to be warmer and safer in their homes.

It is devastating that a true public servant like Sir David can be taken from us in such a way. We hope that he is not remembered for this but for all the good he did nationally and locally. Our thoughts are very much with his wife, family and close friends at this heart breaking time.

To read Sir David's last speech on fuel poverty visit: <https://www.davidamess.co.uk/news/sir-david-wants-end-fuel-poverty>





WARM HOMES WEEK REVIEW

Taking place at a time when energy was and remains in the news for all the wrong reasons, Warm Homes Week felt particularly urgent this year.

That's why we're pleased so many of you could join our sessions and hear about all the vital work happening in the fuel poverty and vulnerability space. We've already had a huge amount of positive feedback from delegates and over the course of the week we had over 2000 attendees across 13 different sessions, from a mix of over 470 organisations. If you would like to re-live the highlights, you can find most of the sessions on our [YouTube channel](#).

Our immediate priority for the conference was to highlight the challenges this coming winter. Sessions included expert speakers from NEA, BEIS, Energy UK, Citizens Advice and Money Advice Trust speaking about the difficulties facing both vulnerable customers and energy suppliers this winter, as both face the strain of higher wholesale gas prices. The ending of the £20 Universal Credit uplift, the price cap increase, and general inflation are putting enormous strain on many households this winter – we continue to call for more action from the government and regulator. As well as discussions around what can be done to help households, we saw fascinating discussions around the Supplier of Last Resort process and the voluntary commitments that energy suppliers signed up to.

Attendees also heard BEIS Minister Lord Callanan speaking about the work of his department on both the coming winter and longer-term priorities – chief executive Adam Scorer asked when the Heat and Buildings Strategy would be coming, but the Minister remained coy about a specific release date. We were also really pleased to hear from Deputy Mayor, Environment and Energy at the Greater London Authority, Shirley Rodrigues about the

specific issues facing London and how the Authority is approaching the problem of fuel poverty.

Alongside the conference, we also set out our [new Strategy](#) and NEA's three key priorities for the next five years that must represent the start of a decade of action and delivery. This fed into our longer-term focus during Warm Homes Week: how energy efficiency improvements can help achieve net zero and alleviate fuel poverty. Sessions during the conference which focused on net zero saw speakers from NEA, Energy Systems Catapult and Citizens Advice talking about the debate over where decarbonisation costs should fall – could they be moved onto general taxation? Panellists agreed there should be a “worst first” approach to delivery to ensure the fuel poor receive the benefits as soon as possible.

Another important issue that was covered was accessibility and digital exclusion, especially when it comes to advice provision. The discussion between NEA, Speak Up, Fair by Design and the Royal Association for Deaf people offered invaluable insight into how advice providers can best engage with those with accessibility issues.

What we took away from Warm Homes Week 2021 is that the challenges facing vulnerable households this winter are enormous, but there are so many fantastic organisations working tirelessly to offer practical solutions and put pressure on the Government to act.

And while we may be basking in the success of Warm Homes Week, remember that Fuel Poverty Awareness Day is just around the corner on 3 December!

RESEARCH

MATTHEW SCOTT, RESEARCH & POLICY OFFICER

RURAL FUEL POVERTY

NEA's research team have recently concluded a research project on rural fuel poverty. This research was undertaken as part of the HANDIHEAT project, which is led by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and is concerned with supporting research into fuel poverty, renewable energy solutions, and energy efficiency in rural homes across Northern Europe. The aim of the research was to conduct a policy review of approaches and barriers to tackling fuel poverty with low-carbon technologies across Northern Europe and the wider EU, and to identify and assess policy initiatives that could enable actors across the continent to address energy vulnerability and energy poverty across rural, remote, and island areas. Put differently, the aim was to investigate if certain constellations of innovation, technology, and policy could address and alleviate the very specific forms of fuel poverty found in rural areas.

THE CHALLENGES OF RURALITY

The research highlighted the importance of the multifarious social and economic characteristics of rural areas, and how they exacerbate vulnerabilities to fuel poverty in various ways. Across Northern Europe, the research identified six common characteristics of rural areas that can exacerbate fuel poverty: lower income levels, limited connectivity (digital, transport, and social); limited access to key services; old, hard-to-treat housing stock; distinct socio-demographics, especially ageing populations; and finally, the greater prevalence of more extreme weather conditions. Furthermore, it is clear that these characteristics are not homogeneous across all rural areas; the challenges faced by island communities in the Scottish Hebrides are different from those of the remotest parts of northern Finland or rural Lincolnshire in England. Nonetheless, there has recently been some attempts to more formally account for the impact of rurality on fuel poverty; Scotland has introduced a rural income uplift to their fuel poverty definition, and proposed definitions in the Netherlands and wider EU have begun to develop multi-indicator definitions of energy poverty, whereby

income, energy costs, and energy efficiency take their place among a suite of broader indicators, such as indebtedness, ill health, and presence of damp, rot, or mould in a home. The proposed strength of these indicators, it is argued, is that they better reflect how fuel poverty is encountered and addressed 'on the ground', including in rural areas, as well as how it is lived and experienced by households.

DEVELOPING A POLICY MIX TO ELIMINATE RURAL FUEL POVERTY

The characteristics of rural areas, whether measured by a formal definition or more qualitatively, have distinct policy implications for any just heating transitions in European rural areas. The research aimed not only to analyse and summarise the key obstacles to tackling rural fuel poverty, but also what kind of policy mix might be able to decarbonise rural homes in a way that is fair, just, and which simultaneously lifts those homes out of fuel poverty. By reviewing the challenges faced by rural areas and



consulting with stakeholders, the research settled on seven heuristic criteria for assessing how well different policy mixes will work for rural communities:

- **Affordable:** To what extent does the policy mix enable rural fuel poor households to be able to afford the relevant low-carbon technology?
- **Accessible:** To what extent is the policy mix simple to access and understand for rural fuel poor households?
- **Holistic:** To what extent does the policy mix include or enable other measures to tackle rural fuel poverty, such as insulation, remedial measures, and/or energy advice/support?
- **Rural:** To what extent does the policy mix consider and respond to the specific characteristics and challenges of rural fuel poverty?
- **Multiple technologies:** To what extent does the policy mix incorporate a mixture of technology, in the recognition that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to technology is unlikely to be suitable in all cases?
- **Subnational partners:** To what extent does the policy mix enable the meaningful involvement of subnational and/or community partners at local, municipal, and/or regional scales?
- **Long-term:** To what extent is the policy mix characterised by long-term certainty, including long-term funding?

LOOKING FORWARDS: A JUST TRANSITION FOR RURAL FUEL POOR COMMUNITIES?

Rurality and fuel poverty are sometimes thought of as difficult obstacles standing in the path of decarbonisation; rural areas, as the research highlighted, face specific challenges which can exacerbate their vulnerability to fuel poverty, and decarbonising rural homes can be costly, complex, and disruptive. However, the research ultimately demonstrated that the existing barriers can be addressed and that policies to effectively tackle rural fuel poverty are both possible and within reach.

For further information and to read the full report, please follow this link: <http://www.handiheatproject.eu/outputs-results>

WINTER FUEL PAYMENT CAMPAIGN

Millions of UK households are currently facing unmanageable choices about where to spend their limited income. This leaves many fearing for their health and their families. Fuel poverty is at crisis levels. With energy costs continuing to rise, this winter will be extremely tough for households across the UK, leaving many with the impossible decision of whether to heat or eat.

To help us be there for people who need us, we are asking those who receive the government Winter Fuel Payment, to consider donating this to us if they are able to do so. The Winter Fuel Payment is a tax-free benefit for people 65+ of between £100-300, to help with heating costs over winter. As this benefit is not-means tested, everyone in the age category is eligible to receive it, regardless of their financial circumstances. By donating a Winter Fuel Payment to NEA if you are not in need of it, we can give life-changing energy and water efficiency advice, provide essential winter items to those in need through a hardship fund, support vulnerable people with referrals and applications for extra support, and offer assistance to those struggling with fuel debt.

For more information or to donate, visit:

<https://www.nea.org.uk/winterfuelpayment>

NORTHERN IRELAND

PAT AUSTIN, DIRECTOR, NEA NORTHERN IRELAND

FUEL POVERTY COALITION NI LAUNCHES A NEW MANIFESTO FOR WARMTH



In light of the challenges presented by the unprecedented energy price increases, the Fuel Poverty Coalition (FPC) Northern Ireland has launched a new 'Manifesto for Warmth', which details 7 key asks to help eradicate Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland. This can be found on the Coalition's website at <http://fuelpovertyni.org/fpc-a-manifesto-for-warmth-2021/>

The Manifesto has been created on the back of Fuel Poverty Coalition (FPC) Northern Ireland concerns that a dangerous combination of higher energy prices, reduced incomes, and leaky, inefficient housing could put many households in Northern Ireland at risk of fuel poverty this winter.

The Coalition's fears stem from the significant increase in wholesale energy prices, which will likely result in consumers seeing an increase in their energy bills.

According to the Consumer Council NI's Home Heating Oil price survey, the average price for 500 Litres of oil in Northern Ireland is £218.66, this is significantly up on the £144.87 this time last year. Gas prices have also risen dramatically with some households of Northern Ireland facing a dramatic 35% hike in their tariff price.

These increases come at a time when many household budgets are already stretched thin. The winding down of the furlough scheme and the likely withdrawal of uplifts to Universal Credit put further stress on many families in Northern Ireland.

Based on the 2016 House Condition Survey2 (HCS), Northern Ireland has a rate of fuel poverty at 22%. It is also estimated that there are approximately 43,800 households in extreme fuel poverty, which means they need to spend over 15% of their total income to heat their homes.

To help eradicate fuel poverty in Northern Ireland the coalition has identified the 7 key asks:

1. Energy efficiency is the number one priority to enable everyone to reduce their use of carbon fuels. The Government must resource a comprehensive and accessible energy efficiency programme, based on a Whole House Solution and the 'worst first principle'
2. Ensure that sufficient funding is provided for energy efficiency schemes that help those who need the most support. This must include a particular focus on the private rented sector.
3. Ensure that the Fuel Poverty Strategy is an integral part of the emerging Energy Strategy so that our energy policy delivers an affordable, secure and sustainable energy system for all households in Northern Ireland.
4. Take action to save lives by implementing the recommended guidelines (NICE NG6) on tackling winter deaths.
5. Provide extra support and assistance to transition those reliant on heating oil towards energy efficiency and new heating technologies.
6. Ensure all households have access to high quality information. Independent and meaningful information will be key to enabling people to act. Helping householders throughout the process is needed.
7. Work in collaboration across all agendas, departments, and agencies to ensure a 'just transition' to decarbonisation, which maximises the benefits for



health and wellbeing and leads to tangible outcomes.

ABOUT THE FUEL POVERTY COALITION NI

The Fuel Poverty Coalition NI was established in 2010 in response to the increasingly serious levels of fuel poverty in Northern Ireland. The Coalition's aim is to drive forward the fuel poverty agenda in Northern Ireland in terms of both policy and practical initiatives. Members are united by the fact that they wish to highlight the urgent action needed to eradicate fuel poverty in Northern Ireland.

Currently, the Coalition has a membership base of over 160 members from across Northern Ireland: representing businesses, environmental groups, trade unions, the health sector, local councils, consumer groups, housing associations, rural support networks, the voluntary and community sector, young persons' groups, older persons' groups and faith groups.

The most recent Excess Winter Deaths (EWD) figures for 2019-20, provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) show the five-year moving average of EWD was 904 in 2017-18 (based on years 2015-16 to

40 For 40

A few months have passed since we launched our 40 For 40 challenge to celebrate NEA's 40th anniversary. We've had a number of staff members sign up and take on their own challenges, with many now well underway and even completed!

Ann Wood from our Income Maximisation team did an incredible job researching and putting together a presentation on 40 facts about Stoke on Trent, while Bronwen Banner from the same team has done an amazing 40 litter picks around Newcastle!

Across our other departments, Project Development Coordinator Shelley Macdonald has been taking on the impressive feat of hiking 40 hills in 40 weeks, and Project Manager Jess Cook has already knitted eight beautiful baby hats for our Warm Welcome project.

A huge thank you to everyone who has participated so far, and we can't wait to see more updates in the months to come.

Joining the 40 For 40 challenge is a great way to help raise both funds and awareness for NEA, but also to have some fun taking on something new. [Sign up today](#) to join the rest of the challengers and let's see what we can achieve together!



WATER

JESS COOK, PROJECT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, WATER POVERTY

INTRODUCING FAIR WATER

NEA is extremely proud to have been awarded funding as part of a consortium bid to Ofwat's innovation fund, for our project 'Transforming customers' lives: Integrated pathways to fair and sustainable water' or 'Fair Water' for short. Our consortium includes Northumbrian Water, Northern Gas Networks, Procter & Gamble, and Newcastle University, each of whom bring a different set of skills and expertise, ranging from managing water resources, to developing new detergents which can save water and energy.

Fair Water will span four years, commencing in 2022, and will utilise the Northern Gas Networks' Customer Energy Village (CEV) – a unique development of nine 'period' properties built to the specification and building standards of their respective eras. The CEV offers a testbed for retrofitting water and energy efficient solutions, and to test how those solutions impact energy and water consumption. We want to trial innovative solutions to task-based water and energy efficiency identified through an open call for innovation, both at the CEV properties and in real customer homes matched to the characteristics of the CEV homes. We believe this, alongside a programme of extensive customer and stakeholder engagement, will provide us with the foundation to develop 'customer transition pathways' – tailored options which identify the most appropriate solutions for individual household types, making the journey to net zero accessible to all.

The project will be supported by an advisory panel of industry experts, and aims to address each of the following challenges:

1. Reducing household water consumption
2. Enabling a Fair Transition to Net Zero Carbon
3. Protecting customers, their health, and their wellbeing.

We will keep you updated of our progress once the project gets underway in 2022. We truly believe this could offer a significant platform to tailor solutions to net zero, agree a sustainable and equitable approach to water and energy consumption, and ensure that no one is left behind.

RAISING THE PROFILE OF WATER POVERTY

On 28 October, the All Party Parliamentary Water Group (APPWG) will meet in a special session, organised with NEA, entitled "Drowning in bills? Why water poverty should matter to Parliament". This session comes at a crucial time, with the recent removal of the Universal Credit uplift, the end of furlough leading to possible redundancies, the increase in energy costs due to the rise in the price cap and ongoing gas crisis, and the upcoming rise in national insurance, all placing substantial pressure on household finances. This perfect storm risks thousands, possibly millions of households, falling into fuel and water poverty for the first time, with situations worsening for those already struggling.

Domestic water supplies can't be disconnected, meaning that water bills are considered a lower priority than other household bills with greater consequences for non-payment. The households hit hardest by this perfect storm may need to reprioritise their outgoings to cope this winter, and one of the first bills to stop paying is likely to be water.

Making water more affordable won't lift people out of poverty and water companies won't be able to cover the net effect of everything that's going on, but identifying those struggling with their water bills could lead to early interventions elsewhere if shared with other organisations, such as energy suppliers. We believe this could be done through improved data-sharing, using the Priority Services Register (PSR) and a financial vulnerability flag, giving another purpose to the PSR, and supporting customers with more than just operational incidents.

But data-sharing like this will only be effective if it results in an appropriate intervention. Many companies in the water sector offer debt repayment schemes, whereby a customer agrees an affordable payment plan which covers both their debt and their ongoing charges. For every £1 a customer pays, the water company matches this, with some schemes increasing to £2 contribution for every £1 paid after a certain period of time. If the customer can maintain this payment plan for two years, then the water company will write off any remaining debt. This is an excellent service, giving customers a real route out of their water debt, and we think this is a model which could be replicated by other sectors and could be supported by Government.

The net effect of the pandemic so far may be a reduction in overall personal debt levels, because of the large number of people being able to clear debt and save more, but this could be masking the issue for low-income households and those who were 'just about managing'. These people haven't been so lucky during the pandemic. They haven't been able to save more because they've seen a drop in their income due to furlough, redundancies or reduced working hours, and their situations are likely to get worse. Chances are, they have been using consumer credit, such as loans, overdrafts, and credit cards, to pay their essential bills – the depth of their financial issues is increasing, but we can't see it because of the overall reduction in debt levels.

HM Treasury has responsibility for personal debt in the UK, and we're calling for them to create a personal debt strategy, to give those worst affected by the pandemic a fighting chance. This must recognise the trend we'd seen since the 2008 banking crisis, of arrears on household bills overtaking consumer credit for problem debt, and so it should have a focus on utility debt, even if it's just as a potential early indicator of bigger problems. We also believe Government could make contributions to payment matching schemes, as seen in water, alongside other interventions, to help people clear the debts incurred due to the impacts of Covid.

So, could water bills be the key to identifying those families falling into financial difficulty, and supporting them through difficult times? We think it could be, and we'll be encouraging Parliament to think that way too.

Our CEO, Adam Scorer, will be speaking at the APPWG session, alongside senior representatives from Northumbrian Water, Wessex Water, CCW, and StepChange. If you'd like to attend the APPWG session please register at <https://connectpa.co.uk/water/>



EMPOWERED BY ENERGY

Life as a refugee or asylum seeker can be incredibly difficult. Having to resettle in a new country you are not familiar with poses a number of challenges and having access to the right support is essential for many.

Managing energy effectively at home is just one of such challenges. Learning about tariffs, understanding heating systems, and trying to navigate payment methods, often in a new language can be very overwhelming. This, alongside other barriers, puts many refugees and asylum seekers at risk of fuel poverty.

Our Empowered by Energy project works to support refugees and asylum seekers by delivering specialist advice and guidance so they can feel confident to manage their energy bills efficiently. Now, more than ever, this project has become a lifeline for many as they begin a new life in the UK and we are working hard to ensure those who need us get the help and support that will enable them to live in a warm and healthy environment.

Find out more about this project and what we are doing to help refugees and asylum seekers across the UK at www.nea.org.uk/empowered

“I learned about billings, units and how to save energy. Very good service, I learned more about energy savings.”

Participant feedback

NEA wins vulnerable customer support award



We are delighted to have won this year's Energy Efficiency Award for Regional (West Midlands) Vulnerable Customer Support Campaigner of the Year!

Our 20-year strong HEAT project was nominated for its work supporting vulnerable people and households in the Coventry area, helping to lift people in the community out of fuel poverty.

Project Development Coordinators Saleem Sheikh and Judy Best (pictured below), who work on the successful delivery of HEAT, attended the event and collected the award on behalf of NEA.

We are thrilled to have been recognised for our work and our team's amazing efforts supporting vulnerable customers.



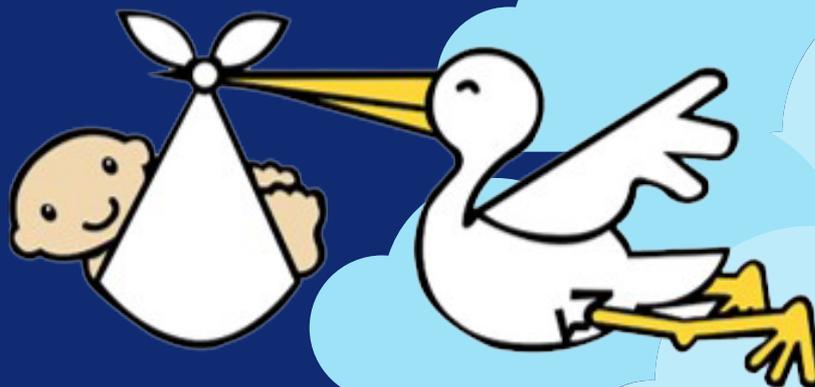
WARM WELCOME

NEA's Warm Welcome project provides vital advice and support to new and expectant parents at a time when having a warm, safe home is paramount, even more so for families experiencing hardship.

After running a successful pilot project, NEA is now rolling out the project on a larger scale to help more people who need our support. Through this project, we will deliver community advice sessions to help new and expectant parents manage their fuel bills in the best possible way and deliver free training for frontline professionals working with people during and after pregnancy so they can provide energy advice, support and referrals to other sources of assistance.

Through this work, we will be able to help more people like Miss W, who was referred to NEA by a food bank. As a single mother with a three-year-old and four-month-old, she had been extremely upset when she contacted the food bank after facing a reduction in her Universal Credit (UC). She was in emergency credit for both her gas and electricity and unsure of where to turn for help. Through our crisis fund, we were able to support Miss W with a voucher of £49 to split across her gas and electricity until her next UC payment so she could use heating and lighting at home. NEA's project development coordinator was also able to provide information on the Priority Services Register and Warm Home Discount scheme as well as advice on healthy temperatures and general tips for heating and electricity usage. Miss W had also mentioned she had a fridge/freezer which was leaking and was using towels to try and keep the floor dry for her children. With young children walking and crawling around, it was important we helped her get this fixed, so we successfully applied to the BBC Children in Need Emergency Essentials Fund on behalf of Miss W and within 10 days a new fridge/freezer had been delivered directly to her address.

If your organisation would be interested in making a difference to new and expectant parents by hosting a community advice session, or if your staff would be interested in participating in the free accredited training, please do not hesitate to get in touch with nicky.swetnam@nea.org.uk



MEMBERS FOCUS

We are LANCASHIRE WOMEN

We are Lancashire Women, a charitable organisation working towards improving the lives of vulnerable and disadvantaged women, by providing a variety of holistic services across Lancashire.

Recently, our skilled money advice team become qualified energy advisers. This training was possible due to our partnership with, and funding from, Energy Redress. As an organisation who offers budgeting, benefit and debt advice, we have touched upon energy issues previously, but this partnership has given us the knowledge to prioritise this.

Advisers highlighted a gap for energy advice through fuel debt and budgeting issues but did not have specific training to carry this forward. NEA certification has allowed them to take conversations further and explore areas more productively. This coincided with a wider organisational initiative around sustainability and working in eco-friendlier ways in areas such as reducing carbon footprint.

Lancashire Women recognise that for working class women, paying everyday bills can be difficult and eco-friendly living can be seen as privilege rather than something that is accessible to all. To counter this, we introduced conversations around energy-saving and eco-friendly alternatives that are achievable and

realistic for families on a low income. This is consolidated through sending out specific energy-related mailshots, devising handouts, and through increased visibility across social media networks targeting seasonal issues such as awareness of the Warm Home Discount. We also offer energy advice in a group setting, giving practical demonstrations of things such as insulating and draught-proofing a property on a budget. We ensure that staff have time to keep updated with specific changes to legislation through attending NEA webinars and by conducting their own research.

As a result of this partnership, Lancashire Women have been able to improve women's living conditions through simple measures such as draught-proofing or insulation which helps serve our specific client base both financially and holistically. Health conditions can also improve through such measures - 67% of our clients have mental health issues and 42% have physical health issues. What we will continue to develop, is the concept of making sustainability accessible to everyone – that it can be affordable for all and impact positively on both the individual and the environment. This 'common sense', practical approach has often been lacking, but through individual and group work, and the recent rolling out of 'Energy Champions', Lancashire Women have allowed best practice to educate both clients and staff, with the aim of introducing sessions on energy advice to other work streams within the organisation.

As Lord Callanan acknowledged in his ministerial address to the recent NEA conference, charitable organisations have an important part to play in countering many of the issues facing people in terms of fuel poverty, advice and visibility of schemes available. As an organisation whose entire mission is to create a Lancashire where all women are valued and treated as equals, we feel privileged to work in partnership with NEA to improve our ideology around so many important energy issues that help us to achieve this.

AGE UK NORTH TYNESIDE SMART METER ROADSHOW

Age UK North Tyneside (AUKNT) delivered four smart meter information events during September within busy shopping centres at North Shields, Wallsend, Whitley Bay and Killingworth.

This was AUKNT's first community engagement roadshow since before the start of the pandemic. The smart meter team said it was lovely to be out and about speaking with the community again. It wasn't without its challenges, but people enjoyed chatting to staff and talking about their energy issues.

AUKNT was fortunate to be joined by Groundwork's Green Doctor who was able to provide energy saving advice and access to energy saving products for the consumer's home at no cost. Also, resources from National Energy Action (NEA) were provided and used as a 'higher or lower' game to engage customers. This enabled game participants to predict energy usage and to inform how much energy their home appliances used.

Across each event there were a number of common themes when discussing smart meters with older people. Questions were asked such as would having a smart meter financially help or significantly increase their costs. The team explained you receive real time information such as cost, you would know what tariff you were on with your supplier and up to date bills. So, you can see what you are using, how much it costs and no more estimated bills!

A small number questioned the space required but the team put them at ease explaining how easy it is for their energy provider to install. A number of people said they would be interested to try and have a smart meter installed. While the team chatted to those attending the smart meter events everyone was made aware of the smart meter information panel for budgeting and that it can help to reduce their energy consumption while also helping to improve the nation's environment. AUKNT along with partner organisations such as NEA is continuously working and campaigning on reducing fuel debt poverty both locally and nationally.

Through AUKNT's events we raised awareness of how useful a smart meter can be with the present energy crisis and most people said they would revisit the installation of a device. Additionally the team was able to offer advice and signpost customers to other services including AUKNT's Information & Advice service for further support related to benefit entitlements, the Warm Home Discount scheme, access the Priority Services Register and energy switching & savings measures.

If you would like more information and how your supplier can provide and install a smart meter then please contact AGE UK North Tyneside on 0191 2808484.



GREENER HOMES AND A WARMER WINTER FOR RESIDENTS IN 64 OLDHAM COUNCIL HOMES

A Chadderton estate has been given an eco-boost thanks to a scheme to improve the energy efficiency of homes.

Oldham Council has installed external wall insulation to 64 council-owned homes on the Crossley Estate to match the neighbouring privately owned homes that had already been insulated under a previous scheme.

The homes are known as Wimpey No Fines. Built in the 1960s during the post-war housing era, they were mass-produced and have a solid concrete outer wall which makes them difficult to heat and insulate.

The works are now complete and will make a big difference to improving their energy efficiency and prevent issues relating to condensation and damp. Cllr Hannah Roberts, Cabinet Member for Housing, said: “We’re really pleased to have been able to make these improvements for residents. It will make their homes much warmer and will help to reduce their fuel bills and help the environment.”

The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme provided £5,000 per property towards the cost of the works. Oldham Council funded the balance from its Housing Revenue Account.

We have previously improved these homes in line with the funding we had at the time. The latest improvements build on the previous energy efficiency schemes - boosting the level of insulation to a gold standard.

Each of the properties now has an external wall insulation system installed which provides energy saving benefits whilst providing the home with a white render finish.

Rose Ogden, who has lived on the estate since it was first built, said: “I’m very grateful to have had the work done to my home. There’s been problems with damp in the past so I’m hoping it will improve this and I will also see the benefits of the insulation over the winter months.

“If it makes our homes warmer and can save us a little bit of money then that’s great.”

Cllr Eddie Moores, Chadderton Central Ward Councillor, said: “We’re so pleased to see the positive difference the works are having on residents.

“This is really important as we approach winter and will help to reduce fuel poverty and improve the health and comfort of residents.

“These homes were built 60 years ago as Britain recovered from the war – this scheme has brought them into the 21st Century.”

The works were carried out by Wates Living Space whose Regional Managing Director, Stewart Reid, said: “We are delighted to have successfully completed the works for these properties, working in partnership with Oldham Council. These much-needed energy efficiency works will benefit residents for years to come.”



Anees Mank, Housing Development and Contracts Manager at Oldham Council added: “Private homeowners and landlords can also benefit from the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme, which has recently been extended until 31 March 2022, for energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures, such as insulation, Air Source Heat Pumps and Solar PV.

“To be eligible for the grant, the property must have a low Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of band E, F or G and the occupants must have a combined gross annual household income of less than £30,000. Owner-occupiers can receive the full cost of the improvements up to a maximum grant of £10,000, whilst landlords can receive two-thirds of the cost of the improvements up to a maximum grant of £5,000.”

Utilita's New 'Wear Warm' awareness campaign calls for 13 million households¹ to 'turn down' the heating amid energy crisis.

Despite the commonly known healthy home heat being 18-21 degrees centigrade, 48% of the nation's households are still cranking up their thermostats to 24 degrees, on average. That's the same temperature experienced in Barbados!²

Why is this such a big problem? What's the cost to the consumer pocket, and our struggling planet?

- ✓ **Planet** – By heating our homes to 3 degrees higher than required, we are generating an additional 13 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually. That's the same pollution generated by around seven million cars each year!
- ✓ **Pocket** – By turning down by 3 degrees (from 24 to 21 degrees) households can save £174 – it's around £55 per degree of heat.
- ✓ **Rising energy costs** – The more energy we use, the more expensive it will become. Being wasteful with energy will mean all bill payers will have to pay the price, in the long run.

Industry disruptor, Utilita Energy – the UK's only energy supplier created to help households use less energy – has decided 2021 is the perfect time to remind consumers that 21 degrees is as high as our homes' heating should go – in the interest of the pocket and the planet. Watch out for the supplier's 'Wear Warm' campaign due to launch on 1st November 2021.

About Utilita's 'Wear Warm' campaign.

To promote the importance of getting cosy over getting costly this winter, Utilita's 'Wear Warm' campaign has signed up 645 charity shops who will each showcase gorgeous preloved winter garments for those who want to get snug as a bug at home, and save on their heating bills.

The pro-planet 'double-whammy' campaign is backed by household name ambassadors – two of the nation's sustainable heroes – former England goalkeeper and environmentalist David James MBE and British fashion designer Wayne Hemmingway MBE.



wearwarm.co.uk

Wayne Hemmingway MBE, British fashion designer, comments on the Wear Warm campaign:

"It's bloomin' obvious really, it totally makes sense to put another layer on and it makes sense on many levels; for the environment, for your health and your pocket. Why wouldn't you?"

The cost of overheating our homes.

Around half (51%) of UK households say they use additional sources of heat, including:

- ✓ **Electric fan heater (25%)** – Cost £3 per 8 hours / same pollution as driving 6 miles
- ✓ **Oil-filled radiators (21%)** – Cost £3.40 per 8 hours / same pollution as driving 17 miles
- ✓ **Gas cooker (19%)** – Cost 64p per 8 hours / same pollution as driving 12 miles
- ✓ **Electric blanket (17%)** – Cost £8p per 8 hours / same pollution as driving 0.4 miles

Bill Bullen, Founder and CEO of Utilita Energy – the UK's only energy supplier created to help households use less energy – comments on why they have launched the campaign:

"Energy bosses and MPs have previously been berated for daring to suggest that consumers put a jumper on to stay warm, and on the subject of fuel poverty – it's not the right message. But there's no excuse for today's Government to avoid a simple 'don't go above 21 degrees message', as we have.

"We're confident that our simple and effective message will have a positive impact on the pockets of bill payers this winter and will help out Mother Earth – let's make the year 2021 the last year that we heated our homes to higher than 21 degrees."

¹Utilita commissioned a survey of 2,000 energy bill payers from 27-29 Sept 2021.
²The average annual temperature of Barbados is 24 degrees.

EDF'S SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP PROJECT USING SMART AIRBRICK TECHNOLOGY.

Ofgem has published an independent report detailing the successful outcome of the first Demonstration Action completed as part of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme.

This report validates the findings that installing AirEx resulted in a 12%-16% reduction in household energy consumption in a trial across 115 homes. This publication is a major step towards the inclusion of AirEx and other innovative technologies in ECO and other grant-funded energy efficiency and fuel poverty programmes.

As part of the scheme AirEx smart airbricks (which use sensors and smart algorithms to selectively open and shut, reducing fabric heat loss) were installed in 115 homes, and the impact measured during winter 2019/20. This trial was sponsored and supported by EDF, and delivered in partnership with Portsmouth City Council and Walsall Housing Group. The energy savings resulting from the installations were measured by project partner Build Test Solutions, using their SmartHTC methodology to measure heat loss.

The results of this trial show that AirEx reduces whole house heat loss by 12% - 16% by 20% - 23%.

[You can download the report here.](#)



Fuel poverty has been steadily increasing over the years and as a charity we are working with organisations to help tackle this crisis as well as support people to use energy as efficiently as possible.

Cambridgeshire Home Energy Support Service

This free service can help with switching suppliers and fuel debt relief. It also offers problem solving with your energy supplier and energy saving tips and advice. There are also solutions to damp and condensation. We run this service in conjunction with Cambridgeshire Acre.

The Big Energy Saving Campaign

Through the Big Energy Saving Campaign, we are supporting residents who are struggling to pay their energy bills or cannot keep their homes warm enough. Through the project we aim to reduce the numbers of people living with preventable ill health through lack of heating, and to help reduce energy usage and cut carbon.

As part of this scheme, PECT is also offering fully funded fuel poverty awareness training. These short sessions aim to raise awareness about fuel poverty and are suitable for anyone who has contact with members of the public who may be vulnerable.

Sessions will provide advice about how to spot fuel poverty, how to provide basic advice and also when and where to refer people in need. You can book a standalone session, or it can be part of an existing team meeting and will take from 30 minutes to one hour depending on the time you have available.

If you would like to access direct support, please do get in touch. Email warmhomes@pect.org.uk or call 0800 8021773.

Green Energy Switch

Green Energy Switch is a not-for-profit organisation that provides competitive switching deals on renewable energy tariffs, and the LEAP scheme in partnership with Peterborough City Council, South Cambridgeshire and Rutland County Council. This scheme helps those people that need it with free energy saving measures such as draught-proofing or LED lightbulbs and providing energy efficiency advice and referrals onto other organisations that can offer further support. Email: support@applyforleap.org.uk or call: 0800 060 7567 or 01733 646253.

If you or anyone you know is struggling with fuel poverty, contact one of the schemes above to see how we can help.

ENERGY BUDDIES ARRIVE IN SOUTH MANCHESTER

As the result of a successful bid to the Energy Redress Scheme, September saw Southway Housing Trust roll out its Energy Buddies scheme, a free and impartial service available to its tenants.

Manchester has the highest level of fuel poverty in Greater Manchester and three of Southway Housing's wards (Withington, Old Moat and Burnage) fall within the ten most fuel poor in Manchester. The Energy Buddies service was created with a dedication to provide energy advice for all of its tenants across South Manchester over the next two years. As rising fuel prices, collapsing energy providers, and the end of the Universal Credit uplift hit the UK's population, the service is in need more than ever.

The Energy Buddies Team are busy prioritising those tenants who are being the most impacted by the current crisis in the energy sector, providing advice over the telephone, through home visits and at free events. They are providing bespoke and trusted advice in order to prevent fuel poverty and tackle fuel debt. They are also supporting tenants to find and switch to their most advantageous tariff.

Alongside the advice service, the team are focusing on educating tenants on how they can make small changes in their homes to increase their energy efficiency. The Energy Buddies want to increase the understanding around how to save energy and reduce waste at home, and in turn support and empower those more vulnerable customers to make decisions about their energy use.

energy buddies

A NEW, FREE SERVICE...

Do you struggle to pay your gas and electricity bills?

Do you find it hard to keep your house warm?

Then get in contact with us today!

We are offering a **free energy advice** service to all Southway tenants!

Call 0161 448 4200 or send us an email at energybuddies@southwayhousing.co.uk

Part of this service to address energy efficiency will include the fitting of micro adaptations and safety features into tenants' homes. This is in line with the organisation's commitment to becoming a zero carbon organisation by 2038.

Over the coming two years, the team will strive to not only support those struggling to overcome financial hardship, but also as a result of the advice and help provided, will prioritise the improvement of tenants' health and wellbeing. We are already working with a number of partnership organisations within the area but are keen to identify more.

Please visit www.southwayhousing.co.uk/energy-buddies or email energybuddies@southwayhousing.co.uk for further information.



BRACKNELL FOREST - ENERGY EFFICIENCY CHAMPIONS!

The South East Regional Energy Efficiency Awards were held last Friday with several categories, across the region to include and recognise and celebrate all energy best practice within residential, commercial, and industrial sectors.

They are designed to reward and promote individuals and organisations that demonstrate a deep commitment to the energy sector providing quality and professionalism in their work, excellent customer service, and sound advice.

Bracknell Forest were entered into three of the nine subjects, Large Project over 250K, Council/Local Authority and Energy Efficiency Champion. As an example, we were

competing against Portsmouth City Council, Sevenoaks Council and other organisations who are much larger than us.

We demonstrated our own drive and determination to deliver to our residents and were commended in the Local Authority/Council award and won the Energy Efficiency Champion. This reflects the work of Hazel Hill Sustainable Energy Officer in helping to improve energy efficiency in homes across our borough. These schemes' Statement of Intent include cavity wall and loft insulation where work is being completed daily, Warm Homes Scheme which considers and markets to areas in the borough where mains gas could be installed as Lingwood and Knightswood. The recent work delivering a project of £900,000 government bid for external wall insulation including park homes. Finally, the Warm, Safe and Well scheme helping the most vulnerable in poor health. Hazel works hard to focus on the most vulnerable in the community and assess what can be done to help. Her knowledge and experience of the local area and energy efficiency technology is recognised in this award.

The evening event was attended by Cllr Michael Gbadeo and his wife along with colleagues from Instagroup, Nu-look and James Sumner from Warfield Park who also received an award for their role as a landlord, all of which helps to offer support to our most vulnerable residents.



TRAINING SERVICES FROM NEA



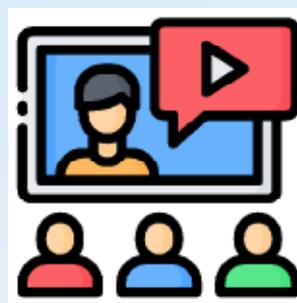
NEA has expanded its range of online learning in response to the current pandemic to ensure that organisations can continue to access our training services remotely from wherever they are. Learning options include:



Supported E-learning

Our e-learning modules give learners the flexibility to study at their own pace and from the comfort of their own home / work space with added benefit of accessing support from one of our tutors if needed. We currently offer the following subjects:

- Decarbonising Homes: Technologies, Impacts and Solutions (NEW COURSE - available soon)
- Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness 6281-01
- Fuel Poverty and Health
- Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency
- Introduction to Domestic Smart Meters



Interactive webinars

Our webinars are delivered live by our expert tutors and group sizes are kept small to ensure a good level of interaction and support for learners. The following subjects are available:

- Level 2 Award in Fuel Debt Advice in the Community 6281-16
- Changing Energy Related Behaviour
- Fuel Poverty and Health
- Paying for Fuel
- Vulnerability in the Energy Market

Fully funded places are available for some subjects, further details are included in the course outlines on our website.

For more information go to nea.org.uk/training