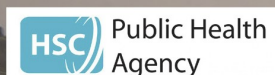




Action for Warm Homes  
NORTHERN IRELAND

supported by



May 2021

# NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the newsletter where you will find up to date information and advice on energy and other supports currently available in Northern Ireland.

Now over a year into lockdown, feelings are mixed with many of us starting to normalise home working, while others are slowly getting set up to return to work or a hybrid of both.

What is for certain though, is that we have trouble ahead with increased job losses, a benefit system ill equipped to support these families and the need to use more energy at home alongside increasing energy costs. All factors leading to, without a doubt, an increase in fuel poverty.

The need for a new reinvigorated Fuel Poverty Strategy has never been more necessary and although some positive moves can be viewed around the £16 Million for the Affordable Warmth Scheme, and imminent changes to the income threshold of £23k alongside disregards in Personal Independence Payments, Attendance Allowance and Carers Allowance, much remains to be done.

We welcome the new Energy Strategy Consultation on Policy Options and note the welcome references to affordability and the opportunity to eradicate fuel poverty. Perhaps this is the vehicle from which the new Fuel Poverty Strategy can be brought about and help us align our necessary pathway to net zero. We believe this could provide us with a one-time opportunity to tackle inequalities and involve all the key actors in the roll out of our new energy system required for all 800,000 households in Northern Ireland, with the particular protections for those on lower incomes and most vulnerable.

We urge you to work with us to this end and look forward to engaging with you over the coming months to prepare a response to this options paper and become involved in the next iteration of the strategy development process.

Warm wishes

Pat  
Director NEA NI

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*Action for Warm Homes*  
Northern Ireland

## NEA STAFF UPDATE



In April 2021, Jamie Miller joined the NEA NI team, taking on the role of Policy and Campaigns Officer. Jamie joins NEA after a number of years working for environmental NGOs in Northern Ireland.

In his most recent position Jamie was working as the Local Environmental Quality Manager at Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful. In this post he had a focus on encouraging behavioural change to tackle litter and pollution in Northern Ireland, running campaigns to improve the quality of outdoor spaces and carrying out environmental surveys and research to support policy development.

With a background in Sustainable Development and a keen interest in Climate Change, Jamie will be looking forward to tackling the big issues in energy policy.

You can contact Jamie at: [Jamie.Miller@nea.org.uk](mailto:Jamie.Miller@nea.org.uk).

# POLICY UPDATE



## Energy Strategy

The Department for the Economy (DfE) has begun the process of developing a new energy strategy to decarbonise the Northern Ireland energy sector by 2050, at least cost to the consumer. The first step in the development of the energy strategy was a Call for Evidence, which closed on 3rd April 2020. Following this, the DfE continued to be engaged with key stakeholders through the formation of five working groups in the key areas: Consumers, Energy Efficiency, Power, Heat and Transport.

The DfE's new [Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland Consultation on Policy Options](#) opened on 31st March 2021 and closes for responses on 30th June 2021. The consultation outlines DfE's proposed vision for the energy strategy, a range of underlying principles around which all energy policies will be developed and key issues to prioritise in delivery of the strategy.

NEA NI are planning to submit a formal response alongside a response on behalf of the Fuel Poverty Coalition Northern Ireland.



## Fuel Poverty Coalition Northern Ireland (FPC)

To allow members of the FPC an opportunity to feed into the response to the consultation on 'policy options for the new Energy Strategy', NEA NI delivered an online stakeholder engagement workshop on Tuesday 18th May.

During the event, FPC members had the opportunity to take part in several breakout rooms focusing on the key issues identified by a select working group within the Coalition. The event also served to help refocus the Coalition's key asks, which will then be used to update the Fuel Poverty Coalition's [Manifesto for Warmth](#).

If you would like to be involved in the Fuel Poverty Coalition or learn more about the Coalition's response to the Energy Strategy, please contact our Policy and Campaigns Officer: [Jamie.Miller@nea.org.uk](mailto:Jamie.Miller@nea.org.uk).

## **A New Fuel Poverty Plan For Wales**

On 2nd March, the Welsh Government published its new Fuel Poverty Plan for Wales, [Tackling Fuel Poverty 2021 to 2035](#).

The plan developed following a 3-month consultation period and includes the following three targets to be achieved by 2035:

- *No households are estimated to be living in severe or persistent fuel poverty;*
- *Not more than 5% of households are estimated to be living in fuel poverty at any one time; and*
- *The number of households at risk of falling into fuel poverty will be more than halved based on the 2018 estimate.*

To make progress towards achieving these targets the plan also outlines 10 actions over the next two years that the Welsh Government believe will make the biggest impact as a first step. These actions cover the 'Warm Homes Programme', 'Domestic Energy Advice and Support Services', 'Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting' and 'Working with Partners'.

NEA welcomes the short-term actions, which are broad and needed, however we are particularly concerned by the omission of any interim targets.

While the Welsh Government is undertaking further research into potential interim targets to be introduced as part of the first periodic review in 2023, it has a legal duty to introduce supporting milestones to set a path to the final target. NEA are concerned that unless urgently addressed, thousands of people living in the coldest and most expensive to heat homes, risk not being helped for years to come.

The impact of the pandemic may make targets difficult to set, but it makes them more important too. 14 years is a long way off and these 'staging posts' can help frontload delivery and ensure there is continuous progress across administrations. This omission places this at risk and NEA would like to see this rectified before next winter. Helping upgrade the energy efficiency of fuel poor homes, especially for the 'worst-affected first', is directly in the control of the Welsh Government and should be a clear priority.

Our colleagues in NEA Cymru continue to work closely with the Welsh Government and partners to make the most of the new Plan. To turn the tide and reduce acute unnecessary hardship, premature mortality, pressures on health services and create a fair transition to net zero, we will need more.

## **Updated Strategy for England**

The new plan for Wales follows the updated Fuel Poverty Strategy for England, published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in February this year. This new strategy has amended the fuel poverty measure, moving away from relative energy costs and now focusing on an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) based measure. Put simply, households with EPC D/E/F/G who have a low income are now captured, meaning 1 million more are households lie within this new metric.

### **Updated Strategy for England Continued**

The strategy recognises the importance of alignment with other Government policies, including Net Zero, air quality and health inequalities. This should ensure that fuel poverty policies are retrofitting homes in a way that also contributes to safety, decarbonisation, and air quality goals. Ensuring homes are fit for purpose and continuing to tackle health inequalities.

The revised strategy still includes the statutory fuel poverty target and associated milestones, providing political impetus to act.

### **Northern Ireland's Fuel Poverty Strategy**

The wait for an updated Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland goes on. The current strategy was published in March 2011 and as such can no longer be considered fit for purpose.

In August 2020 NEA received a commitment from the Department for Communities that the new strategy would be progressed before the end of the government term.

Much like the revised strategy for England, a new Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty strategy should be aligned with other government strategies to ensure successful and sustainable delivery. In Northern Ireland this will include the new Energy Strategy and the Climate Change Bill. Both of which are currently working their way through the legislative process.

NEA NI continue to campaign for those in need.

A new Fuel Poverty Strategy for Northern Ireland will go a long way to helping tackle inequalities within our society, and ensuring all households have access to the most basic of human needs – a warm comfortable home.

# WHAT IS NET ZERO AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

We have all heard the term Net Zero, it is increasingly common in news reports, political debates and on social media. You might even have heard people mentioning it in your workplace. But what exactly does Net Zero mean?



Put simply, Net Zero refers to the balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions entering the atmosphere and the amount being removed from the atmosphere. It is considered 'Net Zero' when the amount being added is no more than the amount taken away.



## Why is Net Zero Important?

Evidence shows that our planet has been getting hotter. The warmest 20 years on record have all been recorded in the last 22 years according to the World Meteorological Organisation. Global average temperatures are now also 1.2° higher than in the pre-industrial era! This might not sound like a lot, but the impacts of this temperature rise have already been observed globally including erratic weather patterns, heatwaves, floods and more severe storms.

It is now widely agreed by scientists and governments that Climate Change is being triggered by higher levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Greenhouse gases are named as such because they act as a barrier preventing longwave solar radiation from escaping into space. This causes a warming effect on the earth.

The most abundant Greenhouse Gas is Carbon Dioxide, which is produced when we burn fossil fuels such as Oil, Coal and Natural Gas.



- **Get a new boiler:** Replacing an old oil boiler with some controls, with an A-rated gas boiler with a full set of heating controls could save around £280 and 3,000kg of carbon dioxide a year. Make sure the boiler gets an annual check. This will help ensure it is working efficiently and safely. If the boiler is over 10 years old, it is worth considering replacing it with a more efficient model.
- **Hot water cylinder insulation:** Insulate the hot water cylinder if there is one – a well fitted cylinder jacket could save around £45 a year, more if the water is heated electrically. Insulating the hot water pipes will also save more energy and can help the taps to run hot more quickly.
- **Turning off your lights:** Turning of lights when you don't need them could save you around £17 a year. LEDs are the most efficient lighting technology; they are available for most types of light fittings.



## WARM HOMES WEEK

Following on from the huge success of Warm Homes Week 2020 we will once again be running a series of digital events from 26 September — 1 October 2021 to explore current issues, discuss solutions and share best practice on achieving affordable warmth.

The full agenda and registration details will be available later in the year. In the meantime, if you would like to discuss sponsorship opportunities please contact: [conference@nea.org.uk](mailto:conference@nea.org.uk).

NEA members will be given priority booking access. For more information on membership, including our new FREE offer, visit the [NEA website](#).

## NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Funded by the Public Health Agency (PHA), the Northern Exposure Project, now in its 11th year, was designed and implemented initially to tackle the high levels of fuel poverty within the North and West of Belfast.

Since its inception, the project reach has been extended to include all areas enclosed within the Belfast City Council boundaries. Working directly with health and housing professionals, support services, community and voluntary stakeholders to inform strategic development, advocate for clients, enhance delivery capabilities and bring affordable warmth, energy efficiency solutions and appropriate 'wraparound' support services to those most in need.

Northern Exposure Key Outputs Include:

- Work in partnership with community networks to make referrals to the statutory energy efficiency programmes in Belfast. Interventions include loft and cavity wall insulation, installation of central heating systems. New interventions designed by NEA and supported by our crisis fund and Belfast City Council funding includes repairs and top ups to electricity, gas and oil.
- Work in partnership with the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP), handholding and supporting householders through the referral process from start to finish.
- Raise awareness of fuel poverty and its effects on health; energy efficiency as a solution; and the schemes available to tackle fuel poverty for front line Health and Social Care staff.
- Work in partnership with locally based advice centres to increase benefit uptake and to help those referred maximise their income.
- Provide energy efficiency advice, helping to change individual and family behaviours around energy use.

### Northern Exposure Continued

- Raise awareness of fuel poverty, the causes, consequences and solutions. It also raises awareness of energy efficiency by providing advice and support to local communities helping them to build capacity to tackle the factors causing fuel poverty.
- Provide training to local communities in Energy Awareness to create local champions to enable the deliverer of professional energy advice.
- Use local and regional communication channels as well as other networks to raise awareness of fuel poverty.
- Work with the PHA and other relevant stakeholders to support the implementation of the NICE NG6 guidelines concerning excess winter deaths and health risks associated with cold home.

## BELFAST WARM AND WELL PROJECT

In partnership with the Belfast Community Planning Partnership and the Public Health Agency, the Belfast Warm and Well Project, was piloted in targeted areas during winter 2019/2020. Throughout lockdown the project continued to directly assist those households deemed vulnerable.

In September 2020, the project entered its 2nd phase, covering September 2020-March 2021, and the range was extended to include all areas of Belfast. Support was offered to the public and organisations working directly with people at risk of living in fuel poverty.

Support included advice and practical support to stay warm and well, and where appropriate, the provision of heating measures and jointly funded discretionary financial assistance (subject to assessment) to alleviate the effects of living in cold and damp homes.

The data for this period is currently being collated and findings will be reported in our next newsletter.



*Action for Warm Homes*  
Northern Ireland

**Energising**  
**Belfast**

# NEA NORTHERN IRELAND TRAINING UPDATE

As one of the leading providers of domestic energy and fuel poverty training and for over 30 years, NEA is delighted to offer both face to face and online tuition to enhance the quality of energy advice services nationwide.

NEA's suite of training products are quality assured to BSI ISO:9001 and will provide you with an excellent opportunity to develop your skills in understanding the issues which might impact on vulnerable, low income and fuel poor households, how to identify people who might need support, and critically how you deliver good quality, accurate advice around domestic energy and fuel debt either in the home, by phone or online.

As well as our existing suite of training NEA can create bespoke courses to respond to your specific needs. We look forward to welcoming you on one of our courses soon.

## Training Delivery — January to March 2021

### Fuel Poverty and Health Webinar

In January 2021 we launched our Fuel Poverty and Health Webinar. This CPD accredited course looks at the causes and impacts of fuel poverty with a focus on the health impacts. It aims to help delegates identify those likely to be at risk from fuel poverty and signpost to appropriate assistance.

Through NEA NI's Warm and Well project supported by the Public Health Authority (PHA) and Belfast Community Planning Partnership, we were able provide this training FREE within the Belfast Area to Health & Social Care Staff, Housing Professionals and Community & Voluntary organisations.

From January to March, 8 courses have been delivered to over 85 participants. All participants received NEA'S Fuel Poverty and Health Handbook and CPD accredited certificate.

Example of comments received from Fuel Poverty and Health course evaluation:

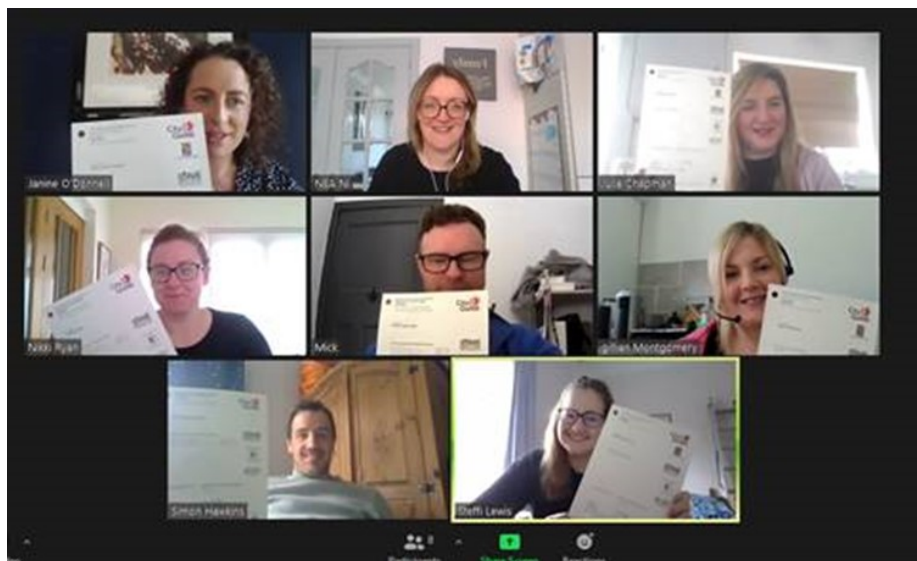
- *Very informative and I learned a lot about the causes of fuel poverty, how to spot fuel poverty and the agencies we can provide which can help our customers.*
- *Thank you for the training and resources which I will be able to use to best advise clients—fantastic course!*
- *Really helped to build on what was a very basic knowledge of fuel poverty to bring it up to a level whereby I feel more confident discussing it with service users.*

Due to popular demand, we have added 2 additional dates on 18th May 2021 and 15th June 2021.

In January we also launched our first NEA/City and Guilds, Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness 6281 supported e-learn. The course aims to provide delegates with an understanding of energy advice and the knowledge required to deliver energy advice to householders.

Delegates are provided access to the online version of the course for four weeks and are able to study online at a time and location that is convenient to them. We provide weekly training webinars and tutor support throughout the 4 weeks. Remote online assessment takes place at the end of the 4-week period.

Congratulations to the Power NI staff who completed the course in February and passed with flying colours!



*"I really enjoyed completing the energy awareness training, it was a great opportunity to increase my knowledge in the domestic energy sector. Nichola was a great trainer, always there to answer any questions and a fantastic support throughout the course." Janine, Power NI*

In April we have two open access NEA/City & Guild Energy Awareness courses running and are planning to deliver more courses in June, July and September.

For further details, fees and booking please contact:

Nichola MacDougall, Training Officer,

**Tel:** 028 9023 9909,

**Email:** [Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk](mailto:Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk)



## NEA NI Training Courses Available Now!

### NEA/City and Guilds Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness 6281-01

This training course is designed for people who wish to gain or further their knowledge of domestic energy efficiency and in particular, is aimed at those who are in a position to provide energy advice. Course participants come from a range of organisations including local councils, voluntary organisations, energy companies and providers, and housing associations.

#### Course Delivery Options:

- **Face to Face** — 3 days of training and 1 day of examination and leads to the Level 3 City and Guilds 6281-01 qualification. *Based on guidance from Government regarding the COVID-19 situation NEA has suspended all face-to-face training and exams until further notice.*
- **Supported E-learn** — Delegates will be provided access to the online course for four weeks and can study online at a time and location that is convenient to them.
  - ◇ Weekly webinars and tutor support will be provided throughout; and
  - ◇ Remote online assessment will be arranged after the 4 weeks.

### Fuel Poverty and Health in Northern Ireland — CPD ACCREDITED

The 2.5hr course looks at the causes and impacts of fuel poverty with a focus on the health impacts. It aims to help delegates identify those likely to be at risk from fuel poverty and signpost to assistance.

#### Course Delivery Options

- **Face to Face** — *Based on guidance from Government regarding the COVID-19 situation NEA has suspended all face-to-face training and exams until further notice.*
- **Webinar** — Training will be delivered live via Zoom (video conferencing facility) to small groups to ensure a good level of interaction and support for learners. Participants will require a device with a camera and sound. Full instructions on how to join the webinar will be provided.
- **E-learn** — Delegates will be provided access to the online course for 2 weeks and can study online at a time and location that is convenient to them.

### Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency in Northern Ireland — CPD ACCREDITED

This e-learn course aims to make delegates aware of how householders may be able to use their energy more efficiently and reduce possible waste whilst still maintaining a warm and comfortable home.

Delegates will be provided access to the online course for 2 weeks and be able to study online at a time and location that is convenient to them.

## Energy Efficiency in the Home (Free workshops)

NEA NI, supported by the NI Housing Executive (NIHE) and the Public Health Agency (PHA), NEA NI offer FREE Energy Efficiency workshops for community groups and organisations throughout Northern Ireland.

These workshops are focused on making energy efficiency come alive for those who attend!

The following topics are included:

- Energy efficient heating, lighting & appliances;
- Keeping the heat where it is needed — reducing heat loss;
- Comparing and switching energy suppliers; and
- Advice and Support in Northern Ireland.

These workshops are currently being delivered live via Zoom (video conferencing facility). Participants will require a device with a camera and sound. Full instructions on how to join the webinar will be provided.

## Tailored Courses

We can also deliver bespoke courses, and design courses to help meet particular business and training needs.

For further details, fees and booking please contact:

Nichola MacDougall, Training Officer,

**Tel:** 028 9023 9909,

**Email:** [Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk](mailto:Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk)



Action for Warm Homes



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# USEFUL CONTACTS

## Age NI

080 8808 7575

## Advice NI

028 9064 5919

## Consumer Council NI

0800 121 6022

## Engage with Age

028 9073 5696

## Housing Rights Service

028 9024 5640

## NIE Networks

### Customer Helpline

0345 764 3643

## Northern Ireland Water

0345 744 0088

## NI Housing Executive

### Energy Advice

0800 111 4455

[nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk](mailto:nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk)

## Volunteer Now

028 9023 2020

## Welfare Reform Helpline

0808 802 0020



*Action for Warm Homes*  
Northern Ireland

# CONTACT NEA NI

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## National Energy Action (NEA NI)

1 College House, Citylink Business Park, Albert Street, Belfast, County Antrim, BT12 4HQ



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