



Action for Warm Homes
NORTHERN IRELAND

supported by



October 2020

NEWSLETTER

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

We were in contact with you at the beginning of the lockdown and it was impossible to predict then how the following months would develop and how people would manage in the emerging world of Covid-19.

Our needs were wide and varied, and those of us who could, were swiftly set up to work from home and introduced to a virtual world praying our broadband did not fail during important meetings. For those unable to work there were a new set of obstacles and apprehensions from the outset and the fall in household income either through furlough or job losses has undoubtedly put many more households in fuel poverty. Additionally, some 98,000 people with specific health conditions warranted shielding, which meant they needed to rely on friends, family, or community organisations to provide shopping, medication or purchase energy, and it goes without saying that special thanks to all those essential workers who have continued tirelessly to provide all manner of support services from health and social care to our retail needs, helping us to identify and find new pathways to support those most in need.

At NEA we maintained our service for households in crisis situations during this time via our Northern Exposure and Warm and Well projects which operate across the Belfast area. We also embraced the technology of virtual training, delivering webinars online as outlined in the training section below.

A key priority was to focus on aspects affecting access to fuel and emergency interventions which entailed spending time communicating with stakeholders around the specific services affected during the pandemic. We worked closely with the Utility Regulator on consumer protection issues and provided evidence-based feedback on the short and medium-term measures needed for energy suppliers. A key concern was in relation to the 180,000 households reliant on gas prepayment meters in NI, the risk of them self-disconnecting due to both affordability and the ability to access a PayPoint, which is the only way to pay for gas with these meters. Some local resolutions were put in place to overcome these issues and work is underway to mitigate the impact of the lack of functionality of these meters going forward.

In other areas, the need for social distancing has impacted many energy efficiency installations which has created a backlog and a necessity for a focus on urgent cases to get boilers replaced and heating and hot water restored. But it isn't all negative, the tremendous joined up work during the worst of the lockdown across the sectors showed us just what can be achieved for those worst affected — this is something that should be sustained and prized.

For now, we will forge on with our policy work as outlined below and continue to deliver our external services while working closely with frontline staff to get people the help they need coming into the winter. We expect a further rise in demand for these services but nonetheless wish to ensure that we can provide that support to people and organisations.

Good luck and stay safe!

Ms. Pat Austin, Director, NEA NI

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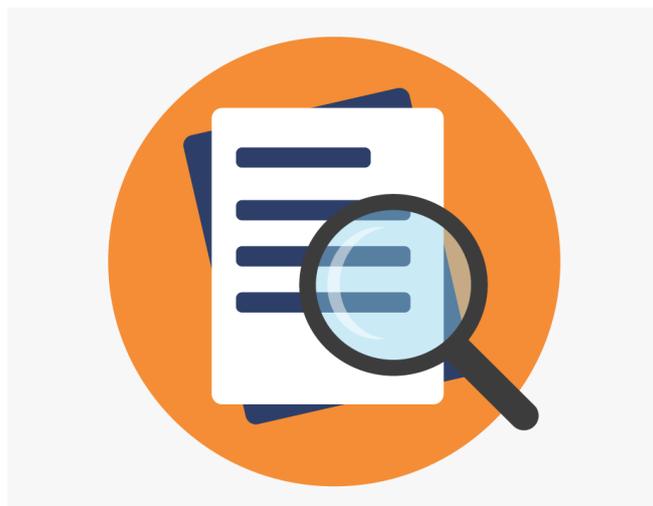
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Northern Exposure Programme

Throughout lockdown as with other frontline projects, Northern Exposure has had to continue to adapt and evolve. In doing so, many of our awareness raising sessions and training opportunities, including those recognised by the Continuing Personal Development Service (CPD), are now available to individuals and groups digitally.

For more information, please see our available online training courses [here](#).

Warm and Well Project

The Warm and Well pilot project, developed in partnership with the Belfast Community Planning Partnership, began in January 2020.

The project was established in response to the 130% increase in excess winter deaths in Northern Ireland published in December 2018.

Warm and Well involves citywide coordination and locality mapping to target the worst areas affected by fuel poverty and excess winter deaths. NEA, through the Warm and Well project, provides the 1st established single point of contact for assessing vulnerable households who maybe living in fuel poverty.

Throughout the pilot period (Jan -Mar 2020) over 130 referrals were received via health routes, the statutory and the Voluntary & Community sectors as well as our partners in local government. Amidst the Covid-19 crisis this service was able to continue throughout lockdown to provide respite to those most at risk households. Preparations for delivering Phase 2 are presently underway for winter 2020/2021.

We were delighted that Iain Deboys, Commissioning Lead with Health and Social Care Board, provided a presentation at the 2020 NEA Annual conference on the project's inception and development. Initial findings arising from Phase 1 show that over half the referrals were in crisis situations requiring emergency interventions.

The 'Belfast Community Planning Partnership project and NEA working together to reduce preventable winter deaths through the Warm and Well Project' conference session can be viewed at: <https://youtu.be/GkbJMkMht2s>.



Action for Warm Homes
Northern Ireland



NEA NI Launches New Suite of Supported E-learning & Webinars



Supported E-Learning

Fuel Poverty and Health in Northern Ireland — AVAILABLE NOW

The 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.

Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency in Northern Ireland — AVAILABLE NOW

The 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.

NEA/City and Guilds Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness 6281-01 online — COMING SOON!

The course aims to provide delegates with an understanding of energy advice and the knowledge required to deliver energy advice to householders.

How will the online training work?

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

Tutor support will be available via telephone / video call.

*Options are available for additional webinar training for a group with an NEA tutor.

For more details, fees and booking, please contact:

Nichola MacDougall, Training Officer

Tel: 028 9023 9909 | E-mail: Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk

NEA NI Launches New Suite of Supported E-learning & Webinars



Training Webinars

Webinars 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. *All courses can be tailored.*

Fuel Poverty & Health in Northern Ireland — AVAILABLE NOW

This 2.5-hour webinar will look 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.

Vulnerability in the Energy Market in Northern Ireland — COMING SOON!

This 1.5-hour webinar will look at how fuel suppliers, Distribution Network Operators and the Northern Ireland Utility Regulator define vulnerability and the support on offer, such as the Customer Care Register.

Fuel Debt Advice in the Community* — COMING SOON!

This course will be delivered over three ½ day webinars and aims to provide delegates with an understanding of the causes of fuel debt, issues householders may face with meters, fuel statements, payment and tariff options. It also considers consumers, private landlords and fuel supplier obligations, as well as complaints procedures and support available for low-income and vulnerable households.

*To gain a Level 2 City & Guilds qualification an optional assessment is now available. This consists of an open book exam which will take a maximum of three hours to complete. Candidates are encouraged to use their course hand-outs to help complete the exam.

For more details, fees and booking, please contact:

Nichola MacDougall, Training Officer

Tel: 028 9023 9909 | E-mail: Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk

Natural Gas Industry to Launch New Website

The natural gas network operators and suppliers have joined forces to design and provide support for all natural gas customers throughout the Covid-19 pandemic by launching a new website later this month.

While the key responsibility of the gas industry is to ensure a safe and secure supply of energy to domestic homes, the industry has been reacting to the consumer needs and circumstances that have changed throughout the pandemic. This new website will provide further help and support entering this period of colder weather, where access to heating and hot water will be even more critical.

The website includes the range of supports available to customers enabling them to prepare for a winter with Covid-19. Useful information includes raising awareness of gas supplier care register schemes for customers who may need some extra help and energy efficiency advice:

- **Codes of Practice** — the standards of service consumers should expect.
- **Payment and meter types** — awareness that consumers have a range of ways to pay.
- **Energy bills** — who can help if you are worried about your energy bill.
- **Care Registers** — ensuring consumers and families know help is there for those that need it.
- **Additional Support Services** — more than just energy support.
- **Energy Efficiency** — simple steps for efficient energy use.

The aim is about reaching natural gas consumers, and communities, ensuring family, friends and neighbours are aware and can signpost those in vulnerable situations due to Covid-19 to the many ways the natural gas industry can help.

Additionally, many consumers in vulnerable situations will be digitally excluded and to support those consumers a user friendly leaflet is being designed to highlight the key supports available with contact numbers for each network operator and supplier.

For more info visit: www.naturalgasni.com.



StopCOVID NI

DOWNLOAD THE APP NOW



Learn more at
nidirect.gov.uk/coronavirus

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| <p>WE ALL MUST DO IT TO GET THROUGH IT</p> |  <p>STAY SAFE</p> |  <p>SAVE LIVES</p> |
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Northern Ireland
Executive



The Independent
Advice Network,
providing advice
to those who
need it most

Do you need advice?

The Independent Advice Network provides
free advice and information

FREEPHONE

0800 915 4604

Benefits



Debt & Money Advice



Business Debt



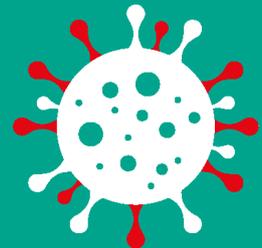
Tax Credits & HMRC Products



EU Settlement Scheme



Covid-19 Community Helpline



Text action to 81025

Email: advice@adviceni.net

For further information or to find your local advice centre visit www.adviceni.net

  @AdviceNI

Useful Contacts

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|---|--|--|
| Age NI 080 8808 7575 | Housing Rights Service 028 9024 5640 | NI Housing Executive Energy Advice 0800 111 4455 nienergyadvice@nihe.gov.uk |
| Advice NI 028 9064 5919 | NIE Networks Customer Helpline 0345 764 3643 | Volunteer Now 028 9023 2020 |
| Consumer Council NI 0800 121 6022 | Northern Ireland Water 0345 744 0088 | Welfare Reform Helpline 0808 802 0020 |
| Engage with Age 028 9073 5696 | | |



Action for Warm Homes
Northern Ireland

Contact NEA NI

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| Nichola MacDougall | Training Officer | Mimi McAlinden | → NEA NI Advisory Group |
| Hugh McVeigh | Project Coordinator | Douglas McIlldoon | ↗ |
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