

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

FUEL POVERTY FOCUS

SPRING 2022



Action for Warm Homes

EXPLORING THE ENERGY CRISIS

This issue | Exploring the Energy Crisis

Welcome to NEA Focus Spring Edition.

In this edition we explore the energy crisis and what this will mean for the nation. NEA NI discuss the impact of the 'price to beat' model on those living in Northern Ireland. We also reflect on our 2022 Conference - *"Support Guaranteed: Getting Energy Markets Right for Vulnerable Customers"* which provided a timely opportunity to explore existing support mechanisms for those in fuel poverty as we start to see various changes within the energy market.

In the members' section of this edition Energy Saving Trust provide information on new energy labels and Lendology CIC announce their new partnership with NEA.

As the default energy price cap is set to increase in April, we wanted to use this edition specifically to highlight the impact of fuel poverty using real life case studies. Both NEA and members have provided case studies to showcase the reality of fuel poverty and the difficult situations households are already facing day-to-day. Hopefully this will also show the positive impact we have helping those suffering in cold homes when we work together.

If you would like to put forward an article for the next edition of NEA Fuel Poverty Focus please email alice.dalgleish@nea.org.uk.



ALICE DALGLEISH, BUSINESS AND PARTNERSHIPS OFFICER
EDITOR, NEA FUEL POVERTY FOCUS

POLICY UPDATE

Over the last two years, an incredible amount has happened in the world of energy policy. Firstly, we had to deal with the impacts of Covid-19, which meant that more households had lower incomes, quarantining introduced new challenges for prepayment customers, and the whole industry needed to find new ways to work with households as we moved to a much more online-centric world.

Then, we had COP26, and all that led up to it. This included a Heat and Buildings Strategy for England which set the groundwork for how we will decarbonise our homes, including an announcement of new funding to help fuel poor households do just that – albeit at a lower level than was promised in the Conservative Party manifesto.

But now, those issues that seemed so monumental at the time, pale by comparison. On 3 February Ofgem announced that on 1 April the default tariff price cap would rise by approximately £700/year (54%) in response to significant increases in wholesale gas prices. It is a record high for the price cap, and the highest energy prices seen in a generation. Such increases are devastating for the 4 million already fuel-poor households, who could seldom afford to heat their homes before the hike. It will also bring millions more into fuel poverty.

The government realised that this would have a significant impact and responded with two schemes. One, a “heat now, pay later” scheme, whereby each electricity customer in Great Britain would receive a £200 rebate on 1 October. This would be repaid by all consumers from April 2023 when every electricity customer will start to pay this back at £40 a year over five years – probably through standing charges on their energy bill. This will reduce some of the pain this winter, but will lock in higher prices for a longer period of time. NEA would never recommend this approach to help an individual in fuel poverty.

The second scheme comes in the form of a council tax rebate of £150 for all households with the banding of A–D. The chancellor said that this would cover 80% of homes in England. A rebate is a better approach, but unfortunately the support is spread too thinly, and the quantum is not commensurate with the challenge that fuel-poor households will face with energy prices as high as they are. And while according to the Resolution Foundation it represents a more progressive approach than others, it will leave around 640,000 households in England in the lowest three income deciles without support because they live in higher banded properties.

Unfortunately neither of these schemes is designed to work specifically to help fuel-poor households, and the support on offer for them is woefully inadequate, leaving those on the lowest incomes and in the least efficient homes in deep peril. We needed comprehensive, targeted support for the most vulnerable. We have shallow, broad measures for all. A household paying by prepayment will still have a £500 increase when you take into account rises from both October 2021 and April 2022. That is devastating, and will lead to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of prepayment customers unable to afford top-ups next winter, going without energy and living in cold homes. It will mean households with disabilities and health conditions not being able to keep their homes at the requisite temperature to stay healthy. **For some it will mean a choice between freezing or starving.** Some may not even have that choice.

We hope and expect that government will have no choice but to return to the issue of spiralling fuel poverty and another price rise later this year, and we believe that they should put in place an 18-month plan to ensure that households can stay warm at home. This should include immediate energy rebates for low-income households this winter; an expanded Warm Home Discount, with a bigger payment going to more households next winter; and a broader Winter Fuel Payment that goes not just to older people, but to working-age households receiving means-tested benefits. Beyond next winter many households will have racked up debts with their utility providers – government could help with this by matching utility debt repayments. And finally, we need to consider what additional protections can be offered above and beyond the price cap – which is a fair price for energy, but not an affordable one. A social tariff, that is mandatory for all suppliers, targeted at low-income households, provides a lower price than the current price cap and is additional to all other protections would go some way to ensuring energy becomes affordable in the longer run.

Lastly, we must not forget that it is a decade of stagnation when it comes to insulating our homes that has made us more exposed to increased gas prices. It has never been clearer that we need to accelerate programmes to decarbonise fuel-poor homes. Now is the time for big investments to shield the poorest households from future price spikes that are unfortunately inevitable.



REFLECTIONS ON CONFERENCE

HAYDEN BANKS, POLICY AND PARLIAMENTARY OFFICER

NEA's first conference of 2022 "Support Guaranteed: Getting Energy Markets Right for Vulnerable Customers" could not have been more timely. Taking place amidst an energy crisis which has seen over 30 suppliers fall into liquidation and record gas price increases, it was an opportunity to refocus on who matters most – the poorest and most vulnerable customers. The stark reality of upwards of 6 million people in fuel poverty following last Thursday's price cap rise is a terrible indictment of how wrong our retail energy market has gone in the last decade.

But what struck me most following NEA's conference was the relentless enthusiasm and determination from those working in this sector to effect change. Whether on energy efficiency, customer service or regulatory reform, we have all the tools at our disposal to consign fuel poverty to the past – and it is incumbent on all of us to keep this at the top of the political agenda.

The conference provided an opportunity to scrutinise existing support mechanisms, outline what best practice would look like for price protection in the energy market and neatly tie together the pursuit of affordable energy supply with the net zero and housing decarbonisation agendas. It was these conversations on a just transition as we move to clean energy for our homes which were of utmost importance. Over the past few months, several MPs have been mobilising against energy efficiency and the drive to net zero, erroneously claiming that this will burden consumers with higher energy bills and our priority for easing the current price crisis is expanding domestic gas production. I can only hope they caught our conference session featuring experts from Energy

Saving Trust, Sustainable Energy Association and others who so eloquently and persuasively made the case for home insulation, energy efficiency and smart meters as the best guard against future volatility in global gas markets. Indeed a statistic from one panellist really hit home – 80% of households in fuel poverty will still be in fuel poverty in 2030 unless we ramp up investment in energy efficiency and clean domestic energy.

Properly regulating our energy market is also of the utmost importance, and it is amazing how quickly the goalposts can move. The idea of a price cap to protect the most vulnerable is now seen to have protected millions from higher prices, even though such an idea was seen as too radical just a few years ago. NEA's Conference this year reiterated the important role of Ofgem and suppliers across the market have in not only identifying vulnerable customers and providing them with adequate support, but properly regulating suppliers and checking their financial stability. It was pleasing to hear Ofgem's Head of Retail Market Policy discuss a new distributional tool they are working on to ensure that current vulnerabilities in the energy market are not replicated as we transition to net zero. Equally pleasing was Utilita discussing their energy hubs, back on the high street post-pandemic providing customers with energy saving and energy efficiency advice which is needed now more than ever.

Overall, the online conference this year struck an optimistic tone despite the current negative headlines. It provided affirmation to all attendees that fuel poverty in modern Britain is not an inevitability – it is a market failure that we can overcome together.

++ STOP PRESS ++ NEA Annual Conference 2022, 19–21 September, Birmingham ++

Martin Lewis from Money Saving Expert has donated an incredible £100,000 to NEA to help us set up a new web chat service to increase our support for those living in fuel poverty. It's due to launch in April.

The energy crisis is set to plunge a further 1.5 million UK households into fuel poverty, meaning 6.5 million UK households could be fuel poor in April. Our services have never been more needed and more in demand. Through this new service, we will be able to expand our capacity by freeing up our helplines as well as reach more people in need of help and advice.

Make sure to follow our social media channels for updates on this new project:

Twitter: https://twitter.com/NEA_UKCharity

Linked In: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-energy-action>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/Nationalenergyaction>

Instagram https://www.instagram.com/nea_ukcharity

THE NATION'S BIGGEST HOUSEWARMING

On 23 February individuals and organisations from across the UK took part in The Nation's Biggest Housewarming to raise money for NEA. Various events were held including a sporting challenge, a classic bake sale and advice drop-in sessions with free cake.

Once again, this event has been hugely successful not only in raising vital funds but also in raising awareness about fuel poverty and the support available.

Switched On Portsmouth raised over £800 with their virtual team 54km challenge with each person in the team running, walking or cycling 54km to reflect the 54% increase in the energy price cap in April that will see millions of households struggling to pay their energy bills. They celebrated the final 1km together in the centre of Portsmouth.

We want to thank each and every one of you that took part in The Nation's Biggest Housewarming this year, without your support we would not be able provide essential support to those most in need.

For more information on our campaigns and events this year please contact alice.dagleish@nea.org.uk

Here's a snippet of some of the other events that took place.



NORTHERN IRELAND

Over the last number of weeks, NEA NI has experienced a significant rise in the number of households seeking emergency support for fuel poverty. Unfortunately, we expect this trend to continue as we now believe as many as 40% of NI households could be struggling due to the spiralling energy cost.

Northern Ireland continues to have amongst the lowest levels of household income across the UK and the highest weekly household expenditure on energy of any UK region. Taken in conjunction with challenging economic conditions as well as the ongoing global pandemic, many families continue to face challenges with meeting their energy costs. These pressures are further amplified by the ongoing energy crisis, which has seen fuel prices soar to record levels.

Unlike England and Wales, Northern Ireland does not currently have a price CAP system in place. Rather, the Northern Ireland Utility Regulator agrees the tariff price of selected energy companies in a 'price to beat' model. The volatility of the wholesale market over the past 18 months has meant that consumers in Northern Ireland have experienced several steep energy price hikes in rapid succession throughout the winter months. This has been a challenging time for fuel poor households, and many have been caught unaware and are facing extended hardship. In December 2021 the Department for Communities announced a £2M Emergency Fuel Payment Scheme which would provide one-off support of up to £100 worth of electricity, gas, or oil to 20,000 households across Northern Ireland that are experiencing an emergency fuel crisis during Winter 2021/22. Whilst NEA NI welcomed this scheme as a lifeline for some of the hardest hit by the price rises, we held concerns that the scheme was not significantly equipped to deal with the challenges, especially as temperatures started to plummet.

NEA NI continued to lobby for additional support and fortunately, in January, the Minister for Communities announced a further £55 million Energy Payment Support Scheme. Under the scheme, eligible households will get a one-off £200 cash payment to put towards the cost of heating their homes. The Department for Communities says it's introducing the support to help vulnerable people meet their energy costs and to support people in maintaining their physical and mental health.

These schemes will go some way towards mitigating the worst impacts of the Energy Crisis in Northern Ireland, however we believe much more must be done to address fuel poverty in the medium, and longer term. There is no easy one size fits all solution to the energy crisis, but rather a need for a holistic and strategic approach to ensure households and consumers are protected from the worst impacts. Northern Ireland is overdue a Fuel Poverty Strategy and the Fuel Poverty Coalition has been calling for the establishment of a taskforce to play a leading role in progressing this vital piece of strategic policy.

Things are rarely politically smooth sailing in Northern Ireland and in February the NI Executive was collapsed as DUP First Minister Paul Givan resigned in protest to the ongoing implementation of the Northern Ireland Protocol. This move prevents the Northern Ireland executive from functioning properly and stops new legislation being brought forward. Crucially, for fuel poor households, it also means Northern Ireland is currently unable to finalise departmental budgets or draw down circa £250million worth of funding allocated through the Barnett formula following the Chancellor's announcement of a discount to energy bills across England, Scotland and Wales, and a Council Tax Energy Rebate in England. It is unlikely that a new NI Executive will be established until after the upcoming NI Assembly Elections on 5th May.

NEA NI along with other members of the Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Coalition will continue to advocate on behalf of vulnerable consumers in Northern Ireland. As we move towards the local Assembly election in May we shall continue to highlight the importance of tackling fuel poverty head on. We have a number of key asks including:

- The establishment of a Fuel Poverty Task Force to bring together industry leaders, policy experts, government departments and expert charitable organisations to work proactively on actions to mitigate the worst impacts of the energy crisis. The £2million Fuel Payment Scheme demonstrates what can be achieved when cross-sectoral organisations collaborate.
- The NI Assembly need to expediate the release of payments for the Energy Payment Support Scheme. The £55million Energy Payment Support Scheme aims to help 280,000 eligible people in Northern Ireland. This support scheme will offer a lifeline to those in receipt of these payments, and in the most severe cases could be the difference between life or death. We believe it is of paramount importance that these

payments are issued as soon as possible. In Northern Ireland we have a significant number of households who rely on prepayment meters (45% of electric consumers and approximately 65% of gas consumers). These households need to pay for their energy cost upfront before they can access it. This means that until the Energy Payment Scheme support is issued, they face the prospect of choosing between heating and eating. Fuel poor households who operate on credit meters run the risk of accumulating debt should the Energy Payment Support scheme be delayed.

- Consideration should be given to the Introduction of the Warm Home Discount scheme (or equivalent) in Northern Ireland. The WHD provides for mandatory social price support to reduce energy bills for the most vulnerable. Qualifying households in GB receive a £140 discount on their electricity bill between October and March. Each year the scheme supports 2 million homes, helping more than 600,000 poorer pensioners. Currently vulnerable households in Northern Ireland do not receive this support.

- Carry out a review of the current system of regulation in Northern Ireland and assess how this compares with the protections provided by the Energy Price CAP in GB. The price cap sets a limit to how much energy firms can charge customers for gas and electricity and was introduced in 2019 to help households who do not regularly switch suppliers. Ofgem, the energy regulator, determines the level of the cap twice a year, and it is adjusted in April and October. Crucially this means price rises are passed through to consumers at set periods, meaning consumers have more time to prepare and react. In contrast, in Northern Ireland we have seen a rapid rise in energy prices throughout the winter months. This has meant many consumers have been caught unaware and faced extended hardship this winter. This is yet another example of households in Northern Ireland being further disadvantaged in comparison to their GB counterparts, as they cannot avail of the additional protections provided by the price cap.



Your help is needed now more than ever

Our research suggests that 6.5 million households across the United Kingdom will be in fuel poverty in April, 2 million more than just a year ago. Sadly, with the dreadful scenes in Ukraine, wholesale prices are already rocketing again with some analysts suggesting this could lift average bills to £3,000 per year.

We recognise that the government has introduced the energy bill rebate scheme, however, this will not be enough to mitigate the impacts for the poorest households.

Help NEA today and sign our petition to push for more support for vulnerable energy consumers:

<https://actionstorm.org/petitions/energycrisis>

And donate to directly help people affected by the energy crisis:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/nea-energycrisis>



Action for Warm Homes

WARM WELCOME

NEA continues to roll out the project across England and Wales to provide vital advice and support to new and expectant parents at a time when having a warm, safe home is of paramount importance. The arrival of a baby into a family when they are already experiencing hardship can greatly increase the risk of fuel poverty.

Already, in the UK, four million households are in fuel poverty. The official definition of a fuel poor household for England is one which has above-average energy costs and, if paying those costs, would push them below the poverty line. It is particularly important when you have a young baby that homes are kept at a safe temperature. According to the NHS, between 16 and 20 degrees Celsius is best. Babies also struggle to regulate their body temperature in the same way as adults – they are unable to shiver. If their body temperature gets too low, it can lead to health complications. Keeping babies warm – but not too warm – is vital.

However, it can be hard for families experiencing fuel poverty to keep their homes warm and therefore safe for their new babies.

Warm Welcome Help

The Warm Welcome project is funded by the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme. Through the project, NEA will deliver community advice sessions. These will help pregnant women and their families manage their fuel bills to achieve affordable warmth.

NEA will also offer free training for frontline professionals who work with pregnant women and their families. This means they will be in a better position to provide advice and support. They can also refer families to sources of assistance if required.

If you are concerned about keeping your home warm and are pregnant or have a baby then please contact the Warm and Safe Homes helpline on **0800 304 7159** or go to nea.org.uk/wash-advice.

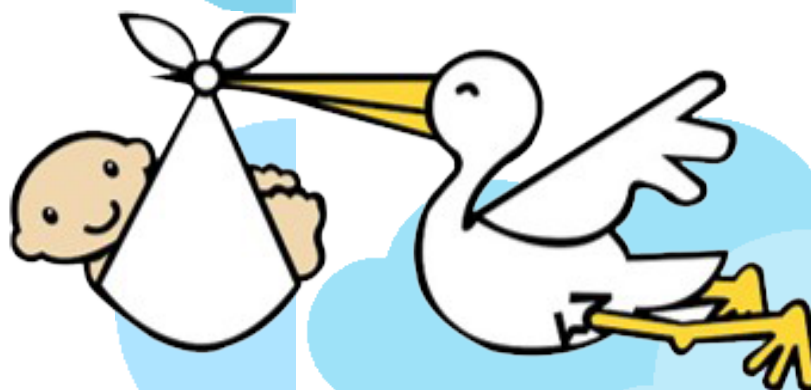
Do you work with new and expectant parents? If so and you would be interested in having one of our staff attend a group session to provide advice on keeping warm and managing fuel bills, please contact nicky.swetnam@nea.org.uk.

If you are a frontline professional and would like to learn more about the free training NEA offers, please contact lynsey.thompson@nea.org.uk.

We are planning a series of events on our Instagram page. Please follow us to stay updated.



[instagram.com/nea_ukcharity](https://www.instagram.com/nea_ukcharity)



HEAT 'BITESIZE' SESSIONS FOR FRONTLINE WORKERS IN COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE

As we head into the colder months, householders may need advice and support to manage their energy bills and access the assistance which is available. If you have staff and/or volunteers who work with low income and vulnerable householders, why not sign up for the free energy 'bitesize' session from NEA, the affordable warmth charity.

Our staff can deliver a short, interactive session for your team which will give them the knowledge they need to give basic advice to householders experiencing difficulties and signpost them to services offering more detailed assistance.


The session would cover the following topics related to energy advice:

- Energy efficiency – why is it important?
- Fuel poverty – health impacts
- Health implications of cold damp homes
- Energy use in the home and how to save energy
- Gas and electricity bills
- Help available with fuel debt and energy efficiency
- Condensation and dampness

Sessions can be arranged at a mutually convenient time and can be delivered via Zoom or Microsoft Teams.

For further information or to book a session, please contact judy.best@nea.org.uk or call **07545 733 953**.

Case study



Mary lives with her husband in County Durham. She says her fuel bills have trebled since October. She says they have gone without food to keep the house warm. She had to go to the food bank just before Christmas. She says she sometimes eats Weetabix three times a day just because it's cheaper. She's dreading April, worried that they won't be able to manage.

MEMBERS FOCUS

In 2019, approximately 12,500 households in North Tyneside experienced fuel poverty. Unfortunately, recent developments – including the removal of the £20 Universal Credit uplift in November, the exponential growth of energy prices, the impending 1.25% increase in National Insurance, and high inflation rates – contribute to the belief that this figure will rise significantly in 2021–22. North Tyneside Council has developed a campaign to raise awareness of energy efficiency solutions in fuel-poor households to target this rise.

During the first stage of this campaign, North Tyneside Council undertook a mapping exercise to identify fuel poverty “hot spots” within the borough. The Authority utilised the Mosaic Segmentation Tool to pinpoint households living on low incomes, private renters, older properties, single parents, unemployed individuals, and those receiving benefits. The existence of several of these factors in an area indicated that those households were likely experiencing or at risk of experiencing fuel poverty. The Authority also analysed data from the Home Analytics Survey to identify areas with a high proportion of low-EPC rated households, ECO-Flex eligibility, and LILEE indicators.

During the second stage of this campaign, North Tyneside Council designed a concise and accessible leaflet to inform vulnerable residents of available grants and funding, the pros and cons of different tariffs, and simple saving tips as well as signposting them to useful voluntary sector organisations. The authority delivered these leaflets to vulnerable households via trusted sources – i.e., health visitors, social workers, Neighbourhood Officers, Social Inclusion Officers, and local voluntary sector organisations

– and included 800 leaflets in food parcels from the Bay Food Bank and Cedarwood Trust.

During the third stage of this campaign, North Tyneside Council intends to hold five Energy Bingo sessions that combine an afternoon of bingo with valuable energy saving tips and tricks. Vulnerable residents will also have the opportunity to interact with advisers from Age UK North Tyneside and NEA and win blankets, candles, and children’s books provided by Octopus Energy. Two sessions have been held in the areas identified at Stage 1 with more dates to follow.

During the final stage of this campaign, North Tyneside council intends to recruit and train several Community Energy Champions to deliver informal energy advice to vulnerable residents on an ad-hoc basis. The authority has already recruited over 20 community energy champions from voluntary sector organisations across the borough. If you volunteer or work directly with the residents of North Tyneside and are interested in receiving free energy efficiency training, please contact andrew.murrell@northtyneside.gov.uk for more information.



North Tyneside Council



homeheatingadvice.scot are working in partnership with the Scottish Government to deliver the second iteration of the Home Heating Support Fund for Scottish households struggling with energy costs.

The fund seeks to provide financial relief to energy consumers who are experiencing significant financial hardship and strives to provide this support to households regardless of the fuel or payment method used. That is, the project is inclusive of: users of prepayment meters, district heating networks and unregulated fuels.

We have already seen over 400 referral partners sign up to the fund, offering support to those needing it most. Trusted referral partners include housing associations; local authorities; and third sector organisations providing energy and or accredited money advice, who can refer eligible clients on to the fund.

Individuals can also apply directly using the 'household application' route, offering those unable to access referral partners' services to apply themselves, or with assistance from Advice Direct Scotland acting as their referral partner. The fund assists Scottish citizens who are struggling with energy costs for a variety of reasons including soaring energy prices, ill health, reduction in income and inhabiting remote and rural areas, as well as those with higher-than-average bills.

Apply to the Home Heating Support Fund today! The second iteration of the fund closes on 31 March 2022, and it is anticipated that demand for support will increase further in the weeks leading up to this.

Prospective referral partners can register for the application through the website, with more information and access to apply available at <https://homeheatingadvice.scot/>

Case study

Mr Patterson is a single father living in with his 10-year-old daughter. As they are living in a Victorian tenement flat, Mr Patterson struggles to keep up with his energy bills, relying on Universal Credit and Child Benefit to cover all of his and his daughter's expenses.

Mr Patterson receives monthly bills for his energy consumption, but incurred debts on both his gas and electricity accounts because he did not have the means to pay every month. His next bill was estimated at £110. As a result of their situation, he and his daughter sometimes stay with other members of their family to avoid high gas bills, and they often do not heat their home adequately during winter to avoid the expense.

A referral agency helped Mr Patterson decrease his electricity debt from £250 to £56 by setting up debt repayment plans and applying to the Scottish Power Hardship Fund. However, he still had significant debt on his gas account that he was struggling to manage on his income. Both debts were incurred over the previous 12 months, at a time where his former partner had wrongly claimed the Child Benefit despite the daughter staying with Mr Patterson, meaning he missed out on a large sum of money through benefit payments.



The stress of his circumstances, the struggle to keep up with bills, and his ongoing health problems, including diabetes and high blood pressure were damaging to his own well-being and to that of his daughter. While he managed in the past, recent price increases made it impossible for him to pay off his debt or afford the ongoing usage required to keep his home warm. Mr Patterson made an application for financial support to the Home Heating Support Fund to improve their situation.

After his application was approved, Mr Patterson was awarded £826.00 to help cover his energy bills and clear his existing debt.

Footprint Trust

The Footprint Trust has a small team of energy experts who support clients with their gas, electricity, water and other heating bills. We provide guidance over the phone, in in-depth 'phone visits', over email and text and through training sessions for individuals and professionals via Zoom and in-person at events and in homes, Covid permitting. Over 19 years the Trust has developed a wealth of knowledge to help people improve their utility bills management, access grants and stay warm using heating effectively. The Trust also administers small grants on behalf of other organisations which provide white goods, energy top-ups and energy saving measures for those in fuel poverty.



Case Study

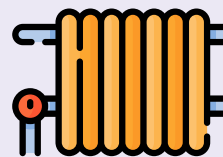
Referred by Social Services, Jessica has a disabled young child. They live in a ground floor flat owned by a housing association, which has suffered a sewage leak above their home, causing them to be urgently rehomed. They have lost their cooker and fridge freezer and other items. Jessica is repaying debt on a pay Pay As You Go meter and is in fuel poverty. The Footprint Trust called SSE who agreed to lower repayments onced rehomed. The Trust applied for Warm Home Discount and added Jessica to the Priority Services Register. The Trust has also suggested approaching Charis, and made a referral to Southern Water who have agreed to fund a fridge freezer.

"You've been absolutely amazing, you've been so quick with all this, honestly - I could cry! It's a massive help."



Case Study

"Speaking with you has set off a whole chain of events ... £70 a week due since July in benefits which hadn't been paid ... a call from a health care person, hope for help with hoarding... assistance with a bath for the first time in two weeks ... I've come away with hope ... can't thank you and the Footprint Trust enough."



Case Study

"Just wanted to let you know now the cold weather has kicked in, I am so much warmer. The new windows and two new radiators have made such a difference. When you are cold and it has been made warmer for you, I notice it all the time and I am grateful every second of the day for this help."

"You and the team made that happen for me and in the days of virtual life, I wanted to ask you to thank all at Footprint and tell them how being warm with much, much better windows, 2 new radiators and cheaper electricity via the solar PV is making a huge difference to my life it really is."

A new partnership for 2022: Lendology & NEA

With people spending more time than ever in their homes, ensuring our homes are warm and safe has become more important than ever. However, the national energy crisis has pushed many more households into fuel poverty, and we now need to work together to take action and provide targeted support.

Social Enterprise Lender, Lendology CIC, have worked in partnership with local councils since 2005 to deliver financial support to homeowners. Their innovative loan scheme enables people to invest in improving the energy efficiency of their homes.

Lendology believe that every homeowner should be able to live in a home where they feel safe, warm and secure and for many, access to affordable lending is key to making that happen.

With an aligned vision of supporting people to live in warm and safe homes, and supporting the reduction of fuel poverty across the nation, Lendology have chosen NEA as their Charity of the Year.

Chief Executive of Lendology CIC, Emma Lower, said "The value of the work delivered by NEA is huge, and a lifeline for the 4.5 million households who have already been impacted by the energy crisis. It's imperative that we raise awareness of the work of NEA and signpost those who are in need of support on both a local and national level.

We are thrilled to announce our new partnership with NEA, and we will be making a donation to support the vital work they do to support households to reduce their energy bills and prevent fuel poverty.

At Lendology, we are seeing first-hand the impact that increased energy bills are having on households".

In response NEA's Chief Executive, Adam Scorer, said "I am delighted that we'll be working closely with Lendology. They have a deep understanding and commitment to tackling fuel poverty. Of course, we need Government interventions and market reform to make definitive progress, but we also need the biggest and broadest movement for warm and safe homes that we can build. A huge thank you to Lendology for making NEA its charity of the year."

Lendology published their Social Impact Report in October 2021 which highlighted that 1 in 5 households across the South West are deemed to be 'non-decent'.

The not-for-profit lender occupy a unique place in the financial sector. Lending funds to deliver social value rather than profit, the impact of their lending serves a far greater purpose and shows that not all lenders are the same. For every £1 invested in Lendology by local councils, £2.64 is gained in impact in the local community, meaning more homeowners living independently in healthier and warmer homes.

One Lendology client who benefited from the scheme found that following repair works to her home, her energy bills have reduced and she now feels much warmer. She said "Lendology are great people who understand what it means to need a loan for essential home improvements. They understand your needs and issues and clearly explain how to meet them in an empathetic and ethical way."

When asked about their experience with the Lendology loan scheme, another client commented "Without all your help I would be freezing in winter. It's easy to apply for and if like me, you have things in your home that are just not suitable for you anymore, or are broken but very expensive to repair, this is the way forward!"

To find out more about Lendology, please visit www.lendology.org.uk or email Emma Lower direct on emma.lower@lendology.org.uk.



SGN partnership with NEA set to help over a thousand vulnerable people

SGN's partnership with NEA is now in its second year and has continued to deliver much-needed support and energy advice to over one thousand vulnerable householders in SGN areas.

SGN, who look after the gas network in the south of England and across Scotland, originally approached NEA in late 2019 to talk about a dedicated referral resource to help support customers suffering from fuel poverty in their area. Having seen a need for such a resource earlier in the year NEA had recently implemented the Warm and Safe Homes Service (WASH) which was, at the time of talks, in its infancy but produced to be scalable dependent on need. It was just what SGN was looking for and a project was agreed to pilot the service on a bigger scale, the extent of which was to be tested in the coming months.

As the pilot began in March 2020 the country went into lockdown and very quickly furlough implications and increased domestic energy use due to being at home all the time began to impact low-income families already struggling. Calls to NEA's WASH service began to rise. Due to the operations team now being home-based, unable to deliver community work, the service became focused on 1-2-1 telephone advice and capacity on the phonedlines was increased. By October 2020 calls had increased by a whopping 400% with complex case work around benefits, debt and emergency crisis fund payments becoming the norm. With the team now struggling to manage both phonedlines and case work NEA looked to see how they could build capacity in a time of crisis.

The partnership with SGN allowed for the expansion of National Energy Action's Warm and Safe Homes advice service through a dedicated triage team, a team which has grown with demand, enabling a greater reach into SGN areas through increased capacity.

Maureen Fildes, NEA's WASH Manager said: "The addition of the triage team has been invaluable at a time of crisis for many households as bills have increased at their highest rates in 10 years, whilst many are still feeling the impact of Covid. This additional resource means we can take more calls from the public and make sure they are directed into the right service at this first point of contact. It frees up capacity for our advisers to tackle more difficult case work, of which we have seen a huge increase."

Rebecca Jones, Project Development Officer at NEA said: "The project has been a joy to work on. The people we have helped support via the SGN/NEA partnership are always so grateful and, in many cases, have passed on our details to friends and family knowing we can help them too."

We have helped people like Imogen, who was referred to NEA by an SGN careline adviser for a fuel voucher after her gas boiler broke and she was relying on electricity for her heating and hot water until it was fixed.

Recently moved to a safe house with her two children aged 2 and 5 after suffering domestic violence, Imogen discovered she was pregnant. Struggling with poor mental health due to trauma caused by abuse, Imogen was also having to deal with her epilepsy and an associated heart condition.

NEA's London-based adviser, Molly, supported Imogen working through a number of issues and going through different schemes and partnerships to ensure the family received the best support.

Molly was able to secure top-up funds, via SGN's emergency fuel voucher fund and other internal funding, for a total of £280 giving the family immediate warmth. She made calls with Imogen to her suppliers to have her added to the Priority Services Register and get her signed up for the Warm Home Discount and together they called Imogen's water company, to which she had a debt, and

applied for a social tariff, saving an estimated £240 per year. Molly gave tips on behaviour change and energy use and sent detailed information on damp and condensation after Imogen discovered her clothing covered in mould. A referral was also made to South London Healthy Homes for a home visit where an adviser could fully assess the property.

Molly, working on another of NEA's projects, Warm Welcome, also had a contact at a local baby bank, Mama2Mama, and was able to make a referral as the family had fled with very little of their own belongings and faced having to start over with little income whilst their benefits were being considered. The baby bank provided Imogen with over 100 items of baby clothing, coats for both children and a pram sleep suit, nappies, bottles and a steriliser, blankets, a baby bath and the additional treat of new-born and mum toiletries. A referral was also made to HomeStart who provided a Moses basket and will provide the family with ongoing support.

The run up to Christmas was incredibly tough for the family so Molly applied for a one-off Biscuit Fund cash transfer of £100 and going back to SGN's Careline team they were able to support with a £30 Tesco food voucher.

Through NEA's Warm Welcome scheme Imogen was awarded two rugs to cover the bare concrete flooring in her living area to make the space more comfortable for her family and a referral made to a tenancy rights organisation to help deal with the disrepair and damp issues in her home.

There is still a long way to go for the family to feel safe and confident in their home but with professional support and knowledge and by using the different partnerships and schemes available to them they are slowly rebuilding their lives.

Kerry Potter, Group Social Impact and Vulnerability Manager at SGN said: "This partnership allows us to support households who are really struggling. Working with NEA ensures that they are able to receive professional, reliable support from a dedicated charity that really cares and repeatedly goes above and beyond".



SGN
Your gas. Our network.

e4a

Fuel Poverty Action have had an extraordinary response to our petition for **e4a - Energy for All** - a free band of energy to cover the basics like heating and lighting and cooking. The energy giants who have been making a killing from high prices should pay via a windfall tax, and another major source of funds would be the millions of pounds spent daily on subsidies for fossil fuels. The petition gathered over 200,000 signatures in only a few days, showing the strength of feeling on this issue - and demonstrating that people believe the money is there to do more than just "take the edge off" gas price rises.

Energy for All would reverse the present situation where people who use least energy pay more per kWh, due to standing costs -- which have, unjustly, massively increased to cover the cost of failing suppliers - and due to the poverty premium on prepayment meter payments as opposed to direct debits. Now, people rationing heat to just an hour a day or less are still paying more than they can afford. Instead, everyone would have a supply to meet their basic needs without going hungry.

We know there is a lot to be worked out, and no pricing system is perfect. The present system, however, is clearly not fit for purpose, and we hope NEA members will support the petition.



New energy labels and how they can support you

Energy Saving Trust are the UK delivery partners of the LABEL2020 project, which aims to support the transition to the new energy label. Energylabel.org.uk

2021 saw the launch of new energy labels for domestic appliances, which include a new design, new features, and a revised, rescaled rating system – A to G. Designed to make decisions easier for those purchasing new products, the rescaled energy labels accurately detail a product’s energy efficiency and consumption, helping buyers make more informed choices for themselves or end users of the product. The new labels are available for: washing machines, washer-dryers, refrigerators, dishwashers, TVs/ displays, and light sources.

Energy and energy bill savings

Based on our calculations*, using an A rated 12kg washing machine for 100 cycles could save 63 kWh of energy and £13 a year compared to a G-rated machine. Using an A- rated fridge freezer instead of a G-rated one, could save 253 kWh of energy and £51 a year (based on a 230 litre fridge with 100 litre freezer). When you consider this over the lifetime of the product as well as all the other energy labelled products in the home, a more efficient appliance can add up to substantial savings in both energy consumption and energy bills.

Washing machine energy lable class	Annual energy consumption (kWh per year)	Electricity costs (£ per year)
A	50	10
G	113	23

Procurement guidelines

As part of the LABEL2020 project we have developed some free guidelines for buyers and procurement professionals. These outline how you can use the energy label in your decision making, helping you make energy efficient choices, achieve sustainability targets, and reduce the energy consumption and costs to end users. The guidelines include useful information, such as:

- What the new energy labels look like
- Why energy labels are important
- A page of procurement FAQs

Importantly the guidelines will help you to understand the differences in energy consumption between the various energy classes and as such how much energy and money can be saved by choosing a product with a better energy rating.

You can download a copy of the guidelines [here](#).

Free resources

Our [website](#) offers a range of free resources for you to use. For example, we have consumer [leaflets](#) and [FAQs](#) which members of the public can be directed to, as well as links to the latest [legislation](#), practical information for professionals, and a direct line to ask us any questions.

*Energy Saving Trust figures – correct as of November 2021

Fridge freezer energy lable class	Annual energy consumption (kWh per year)	Electricity costs (£ per year)
A	91	18
G	344	69



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The Fair Energy Campaign

The Fair Energy Campaign is a volunteer-led movement to tackle fuel poverty and improve access to green energy through community action in the wake of the increasing cost of living and climate change. Until last October there were 4 million households in fuel poverty in the UK. A massive increase of 54% in energy costs within six months, pushed this figure to 6.5 million households.

On Saturday 12 February, thousands of individuals and organisations including The Fair Energy Campaign in 25 cities across the UK, joined together to protest against the cost of living crisis and highlight the appalling rise in energy bills. The poorest households on prepayment meters will suffer the most. But with the increase in energy bills contributing to the rising costs of living, clearly this is not a problem for those in fuel poverty alone, but a national emergency that requires deep sector reform. The government's response (e.g., council tax rebates and discounts on bills) to the energy crisis is completely inadequate and fails to acknowledge the damage it will cause to millions of families and households.

To address the crisis our campaign developed action in three strands: emergency; education; and policy advocacy.

The education strand aims to increase climate and energy literacy within schools while also lowering carbon dioxide levels through our school pilot with St. John's the Baptist primary school and upcoming energy challenges.

Our policy and advocacy strand brings together groups from four London boroughs: Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest. We collaborate with young people in creating meaningful policy while also equipping young people with the skills and tools needed to be Energy Champions in their own communities.

Through our emergency strand, we are developing easily accessible information on fuel hardship schemes and helping people to apply for these funds through these schemes, as well as assisting with initiatives at community level working to alleviate fuel poverty.

If you are an organisation or individual interested in learning more or would like to get involved, please send us an email on: Fairenergyuk@gmail.com.

Join the campaign, be part of the change, don't get left behind.

Severn Wye's energy advocacy

With energy bills set to rise to record levels, and NEA predicting that 6.5 million households could face fuel poverty this April, Severn Wye's energy advocacy service is more important than ever. The service is completely free (as it's funded by Energy Redress scheme) and offers personalised, one-to-one support for people who are experiencing fuel debt, issues with heating their home, high energy bills or problems with their supplier. We support clients throughout Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, and South Gloucestershire with energy-related issues that clients find they've not able to resolve independently, being that support in a time of energy crisis.

Recent case studies from the service show its value and the positive impact that energy advocacy can have for clients. For example, in January our energy advocate for Cheltenham and the Cotswolds worked with a client in Cheltenham who was in a lot of distress due to issues with her energy bills that had been ongoing since July 2021, when she'd moved into the property. The client had not been able to set up an account with her energy supplier and, as a result had become indebted to them.

Our advocate called the energy supplier and set up an account for the client, as well as providing the supplier with accurate meter readings. The advocate set up a direct debit of £58 per month with the supplier, to cover the client's energy usage and pay off a sustainable amount of the debt each month. Our advocate also gave the client general energy-saving advice, talked her through how to understand her energy bills, and explained how to read the energy meters in the client's home. The client was relieved to have had support from the advocacy project, saying, "I don't know how I would have done this by myself. I feel relieved, like a big pressure has been lifted."

In another recent example of our advocacy work, our South Gloucestershire advocate supported a client with an energy debt of almost £800 which they were unable to pay back. Our advocate visited the client to explore the situation with them and, after chatting with the client about their debt, helped them to apply for a British Gas fuel grant, which was approved. The client's debt was cleared, giving them much better control over their finances. The

advocate also helped the client to apply for the Warm Home Discount, thereby reducing the client's winter fuel bills. We also work closely with the local councils on their Household Support Funds to ensure residence in fuel poverty receive support.

Over the last two years, we have reached almost 3,500 households with energy advice and support, helping households to save an estimated £147,000 on their energy costs. Through the advocacy service, we offer advice via email and telephone, as well as home visits, to make sure our advocates can offer the client the most beneficial advice possible. The advocacy project specialises in in-depth, personalised support, designed to empower clients to take control of their energy situation.

Our energy advocates also offer drop-in energy advice sessions and energy awareness talks, which we often deliver in partnership with local organisations. Through these partnerships – for example with Gloucestershire Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (GARAS) and the Herefordshire Primary Care Network – we ensure that our service is reaching those who need it most.

If you'd like more information about the advocacy service or you have any questions about our work, don't hesitate to get in touch at advocate@severnwey.org.uk. If you'd like to refer someone to our advocacy service, please complete [this form](#). We also produce a monthly advocacy newsletter, which contains all the information about current and future opportunities, including free energy awareness training for professionals and details of upcoming drop-in sessions. To sign up for the newsletter, please [click here](#).



severn wye

Case Studies

Anne

Anne is a single parent on a low income. She has been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD), which sometimes causes her to make poor judgements and unrealistic financial commitments. The father of her child has stopped working and had been unable to contribute to ensuring their son had Christmas presents and food over the Christmas period.

Anne had spent more money than she could afford over the Christmas period and was now suffering the consequences of having to pay back money that she had borrowed. She had already had four referrals to Warm Homes and they were unable to help her any further.

Anne was in a poor state of mind and very tearful when she realised that her gas and electricity would not last until she received her next Universal Credit payment. Due to her mental health condition, she suffers extreme anxiety and spends a lot of time indoors by herself. This means that she uses her heating constantly. Further to this, Anne was panicking about being able to keep the house warm enough for her son.

Anne is now receiving support with her mental health and has had support to sort out her debt and arrange repayment plans. However, prior to getting support from Ancora, Anne did not understand she had a mental health condition that caused her to avoid the reality of her situation. She had spent many months stock piling unopened bills and letters, which meant that she had a lot of accrued debt to deal with, once she started to address her situation. This has left Anne with no disposable income and an inability to save money for times when she is struggling with the rising cost of living.

Anne realises that she is going to have to take advice on how to be more economical with her fuel. As she has smart meters she is able to monitor them to understand where she might be using more fuel than necessary and take steps to reduce unnecessary usage.

Ancora were able to use the Household Fund to help with her immediate situation. Anne was made to understand that this funding is not an everlasting pot of money. The help to provide Anne with enough credit on her meter gave her some relief and breathing space to focus on how she could make changes to avoid being in this desperate situation in the future.

Derek

Derek lost his job at the start of the pandemic and due to his anxiety; he has struggled to look for work. He contacted Ancora as he had no heating and had accrued arrears of approx. £500 by not putting any credit on his gas meter. His cooker was also broken and he was unable to cook a meal as only the grill worked. Initially, Ancora applied for the Eon Trust Fund on Derek's behalf. A short while later, Eon emailed back stating that the fund application had been declined, 'due to confidential internal requirements'. We rang Eon, but they were unwilling to provide any further detail or advice.

We also referred Derek to Warm Homes Oldham and requested support for a cooker as well as emergency credit and support regarding the debt on his meter.

Warm Homes contacted Derek, but he became agitated with their questions and advice to add the £45 current debt on the meter to the £500 debt. Derek was concerned that this would further affect his ability to get straight. He put the phone down on the adviser.

We then referred him to NEA and he was successful in receiving £140 Warm Homes Discount, as he had not been eligible with his supplier. We also contacted British Gas Trust Fund but they would not accept the referral until Derek had received accredited debt advice.

We re-referred Derek to Warm Homes Oldham, explaining the situation again and adding details of his mental health issues and referred Derek to CAB who were able to apply to the British Gas Trust Fund.

Some months later, we contacted Derek, he now has a new cooker, and the debt on his meter has been cleared. He is also more aware that if he does not regularly top up his meter, in colder weather, he is likely to have accrued a significant debt again.

KeyRing
... We're Life Changing

Flagging fuel affordability using Switchee Real Time Data

With over 32,000 properties across the east of England, maintaining Flagship's property portfolio is a huge task, especially whilst minimising the impact on the tenant. With plans to innovate their customer journey end-to-end and provide support to their most vulnerable residents, the Flagship team needed a solution to aid in their ambition of preventative maintenance. In addition, with energy bills increasing and with ambitious Net Zero targets, a solution to identify tenants at risk of fuel unaffordability and optimise heating use in order to cut energy bills and carbon emissions was required.

The solution, Switchee. In just two years, the partnership between Flagship and Switchee has resulted in 2,000 Switchee devices installed into tenants' homes. The installation programme of 20,000 homes is the UK housing sector's largest rollout of internet connected technology and part of a wider digital transformation strategy for the Group's stock.

Specifically designed for Social Housing, Switchee goes far beyond being a smart thermostat. Using five sensors, Switchee understands occupancy and optimises heating settings; providing landlords with property alerts such as unaffordable fuel, condensation, damp and mould and boiler failure.

Empowered with more insight into the performance of its stock, Flagship can now identify issues in real-time, fixing them before they become problems and improving further the quality of service to its tenants. For example, Flagship use the devices to test boilers remotely, allowing pre-winter tests to be completed and any fixes to be made before the winter; thus safeguarding the most vulnerable tenants.

“Switchee has made my life much easier, regulating my heating and helping manage my cystic fibrosis. I can set my desired temperature and forget about it.”

– Mr. Andrews, Flagship tenant

With data security being of utmost importance and the use of text, email and letter being costly and unreliable; Flagship use Switchee's in-home display to directly communicate with tenants. In a recent NPS survey the company received a 92% response rate to messages within 24 hours from tenants – an uplift of 75% compared to email and letters.

A further example of using the in-home display is to directly support those tenants at risk of fuel unaffordability. Using Switchee's analytics to identify properties at high risk of unaffordable fuel, Flagship can send tenants support and advice including, opportunity to apply for HACT Fuel vouchers, energy efficiency tips and conducting surveys to have more in-depth support.

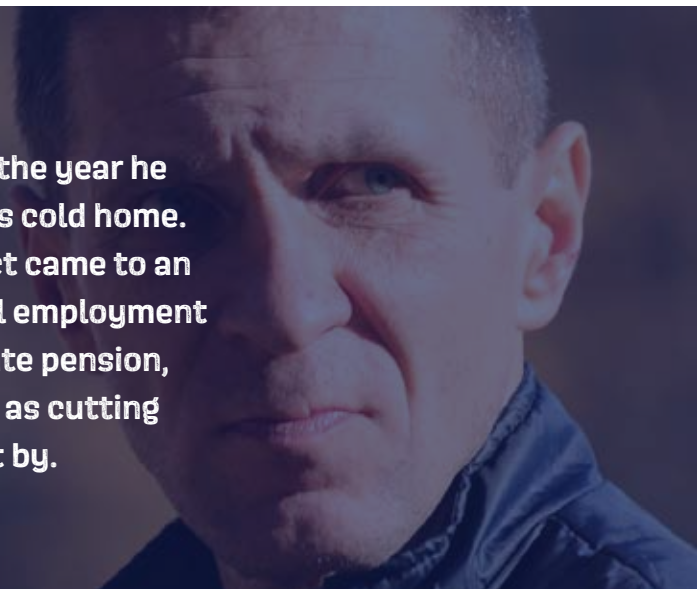
This project highlights the significant need for the UK social housing industry to shift and scale up fuel affordability and retrofit projects to better safeguard tenants from rising energy bills.

For further information on the project please read the full press release [here](#) or contact Switchee,



Case Study

Veteran Alex lives in Devon and for many months of the year he wears a full winter coat inside to stay warm inside his cold home. Alex spent his career in the military until his contract came to an end two years ago. He says he's struggled to find full employment since then. On leaving he began claiming an immediate pension, but the low rate has left him making sacrifices, such as cutting out his heating and relying on food banks, just to get by.



THE SOUND OF POVERTY

Fuel poverty smells of damp clothes and mouldy walls, it feels like cold bones and tastes of another missed meal. We recognise what it looks like too – poorly insulated homes, damaged roofs, worried families. But what does fuel poverty sound like? Earlier, as I sat down with some of our customers in the North East of England, the most distinctive sound was laughter.

As people shared stories of “draughts so strong they blow doors open”, and about the random jumble of slippers, onesies and coats you would wear to keep warm, it was a relief to know you were not alone. For many, it is embarrassing to talk about your struggle with friends, neighbours and family, never mind strangers, so facilitating such conversations is crucial in helping people to voluntarily reach for support. But the laughter stopped as we discussed a more familiar sound of fuel poverty, one which too many people encounter when they take that first step to seek support – “I’m sorry but it’s not my job”.

Across the group, everyone shared that rejection of support from local authorities, suppliers and other bodies was a common experience – even when support measures were technically available. Bodies which do have mechanisms of support were described as requiring an innate knowledge of a maze of procedure and process which even those inside the organisations fail to grasp. Often, reaching out to local authorities and suppliers is a last resort for those struggling with fuel poverty. It is deafeningly clear that customer-facing individuals across organisations which deal with vulnerable individuals must have a mature model of signposting to existing support.

With energy costs rising at an unprecedented rate, another sound is the beeping of prepayment meters as they alert families, often in the dead of night, that they have run out. In situations like this, emergency loans of as little as £5 are often all that is on offer, staving off another round of beeping by a couple of days if not less.

One individual, who worked as a welder across the world until recently, spoke about how he lives on £127 a fortnight. Within this budget, he spoke of how essential it was to set aside money for a mobile phone contract, describing it as a “lifeline” to services without which he would be “lost”. His incredibly tight budget means that he already is stretched beyond the limit, saying that he “can’t save anymore” to provide for the steep rise in energy bills.

Individuals turned to rationing and self-disconnection to plug the gap – a situation which will only be made more extreme as energy prices rise. Doing so means that these customers sometimes fail to register as vulnerable to suppliers – though even when customers reach out for Smart Meters, which could better support and identify their energy needs, this is sometimes out of reach.

In one case, a customer was denied access to smart meters on the grounds that their current meter is not safe to access for an installation. Nevertheless, risk of injury for the customers accessing the current meter is deemed acceptable. Reported installation fees for smart meters of £40 also marginalise those who may benefit most from tracking their usage and excludes this vulnerable group from a means of data collection which may highlight them as in need of support.

Despite households across the country barely making ends meet, it was clear that the wider community is playing a vital role in offering support in the most extreme cases. One in the group said that she will “go over to my neighbours to get a bath just to warm up my bones”, another that they will help neighbours out with money if they have extra to top up meters. April 1 nears, communities across the country will need organisations to prioritise value-based decision making and change the sound of fuel poverty to “that’s my job”.

You can read more about the work the Wise Group does with households across the UK in our energy report found [here](#).

Ewan McCall, The Wise Group
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Family's lives saved through free home safety service in Burton on Trent

A local family supported through the project had been at risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and a fatal accident due to an undetected gas leak.

East Staffordshire Family Support Service, Harvey Girls and Dads4Dads recently launched their 'Be Well, Be Energy Fit' service. The service offers free support around family wellbeing, energy saving and home and money advice to families concerned about increasing fuel bills.

Partnering with local gas distribution network Cadent Gas, the 'Be Well, Be Energy Fit' service also offered essential safety measures such as free home safety checks and gas appliance servicing.

A local family, who had lived in their three-bedroom property for six years, were offered free support through the project. Due to concerns around the cost of works, the family had not had their gas appliances serviced for a long period of time. The home was fitted with gas central heating, a gas cooker and two gas fires.

Upon arrival at the property, the Cadent Gas engineer immediately diagnosed a dangerous gas leak. The engineer reported that the gas fire was not burning correctly and acting quickly, arranged for a specially-trained second engineer to attend the property. The gas leak was then traced, secured, and the rest of the property checked for safety.

The engineer explained that without intervention, the gas leak would have continued and presented a serious risk of carbon monoxide poisoning to the family. As well as the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, the gas leak could have led to fire or explosion, with potentially devastating consequences to neighbouring life and property.

After being made aware of the severity of the gas leak, the family learned about the dangers of carbon monoxide as part of their support from the charity. The team quickly realised that the family were experiencing some of the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning, adding to the homeowner's wider illnesses.

The homeowner said, "I was really scared initially. The engineer said they hadn't seen a job like this in a long time. They saved our lives, and I am so grateful that we got this support.

"Cadent Gas were really efficient and referred us to NEA (National Energy Action) who replaced our cooker for us. I would urge everyone to ensure that they get their gas appliances checked annually as this is so important. I hate to think what might have happened to us without this support.

"I have always lived with family until we bought this house and I never realised the importance of getting things checked."

Cadent Gas projects officer Wayne Merry said:

"Carbon monoxide is an incredibly dangerous gas that can be emitted by appliances that are not working correctly. Due to the human body being unable to smell, taste or see carbon monoxide, it is vitally important that all households ensure that their gas appliances are serviced annually, and carbon monoxide alarms are installed at home."

"The approach of taking a much more proactive response in dealing with emergency situations is a company first. Rather than waiting for the emergency call where someone could be in immediate danger, we are helping the most vulnerable before that situation arises."

This household's story is a stark reminder of the danger posed and the significance of projects like the 'Be Well, Be Energy Fit' service".

The 'Be Well, Be Energy Fit' service being offered to families includes the provision of carbon monoxide alarms, a home safety check and signposting to organisations that may be able to offer specialist support, grants or help with gas appliance repairs and replacements.

Support is open to all local families, regardless of circumstances such as household income, living arrangements or employment status.

Families are welcome to enquire about the Be Well, Be Energy Fit service by calling 07841 485866 or going online to eaststaffordshirefamilysupport.co.uk.

To find out more visit

eaststaffordshirefamilysupport.co.uk.



harveygirls

Dads & Dads

Case Studies

Sandy

Single mother of two Sandy B lives in Bolton with her teenage children. She says that the family do all they can to keep warm as the bills continue to rise – she keeps the heating off when the kids are at school. Financial pressures mean she had already been "penny-pinching all the time", but rising energy bills have added to the strain. As a result of her appearing on the BBC News website, Sandy received anonymous donations to pay her energy bills for a couple of years.

Alan

Alan G is a 74-year-old retired industrial cleaner who lives alone in a two-bed flat in Coventry. The cost of living rise caused by energy bills increasing is stretching his already limited budget. He criticises the decision to scrap the triple lock: "The people in Government don't really care. As long as they get their £81,000 [salary] a year ... they can go and get all these wages aside from their normal job and just leave us to it."

Jeanette

Jeanette K is 52 and lives in Sheffield with her husband and two kids. Jeanette works two admin jobs and earns £1,300 a month, but her household still struggles to pay their energy bill. Jeanette's husband is on £96 per week statutory sick pay and her children, 19 and 20, both live at home, contributing £80 a month each. She never lets the thermostat go above 15C and in the morning she leaves it on a setting of just six or seven.

Karen

Single mother Karen Blinco, 31, is a full-time student looking after two children, 14 and eight, in Oldham, Greater Manchester. They can only afford to have the heating on once a day, after a charity donation of £140 towards her fuel costs failed to even last her a month and her Universal Credit was cut. She puts the girls' school uniforms on the radiator in the mornings and put the heating on for half an hour for a quick blast of heat so they don't feel freezing in the morning. Sometimes they go to Karen's mum's house to shower.

TRAINING SERVICES FROM NEA



Action for Warm Homes

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:

- Delivering High Quality Domestic Energy Advice: A Practical Guide [NEW]
- Decarbonising Homes: Technologies, Impacts and Solutions
- 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
- Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency
- Understanding Fuel Poverty and Health: Impacts on mental health

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 or contact lynsey.thompson@nea.org.uk