

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

FUEL POVERTY FOCUS

SUMMER 2022



Action for Warm Homes

WORK BEGINS IN
FISHWICK

Fuel Poverty Focus

Summer 2022

Welcome to NEA Fuel Poverty Focus summer edition. In this issue we explore the ongoing focus of our policy team on the energy crisis, and NEA Northern Ireland discusses how political instability is leaving households at risk of being stranded without support.

We had our first in-person parliamentary event since the start of the Covid pandemic at the House of Lords in May, when we brought together NEA members, stakeholders, industry colleagues and parliamentarians to discuss the need for working in collaboration to help protect the most vulnerable this coming winter.

In the members' section of this edition Energy Systems Catapult release their report on the Solutions to Tackle Energy Poverty (STEP) project; CSE discusses their Staying Warm Together project which explores the barriers South Asian communities face in accessing support; and Dudley Council highlights the benefit of energy efficiency measures they have been able to deliver to over 200 vulnerable households.

And don't forget that NEA is holding its first annual conference and exhibition in two years – more details across the page and we really hope you are able to attend.

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

The background of the entire page is a photograph. In the foreground, three wooden blocks are arranged horizontally, spelling out 'EAT' in black capital letters. To the left of these blocks, a metal fork is partially visible, with its tines pointing downwards. Above the 'EAT' blocks, another wooden block with a red capital letter 'H' is visible, though slightly out of focus. The background is a light, neutral color.

NEA Annual Conference & Exhibition 2022

On Monday 19 to Wednesday 21 September 2022 NEA will return to an in-person conference at the Birmingham Conference and Events Centre, Hill Street, Birmingham.

Our conference has never been needed more. The unprecedented energy crisis means 6.5 million UK households are now in fuel poverty. That's one in four.

We will come together with industry, voluntary organisations, government, policy makers and other stakeholders. And, we will stand together to tackle unprecedented energy price increases alongside the wider cost-of-living implications.

Booking for conference is now open with early-bird discounts available until 31 July. Additional discounts are also available for NEA Members and Business Supporters Group.

For more information and to book go to [**nea.org.uk/conference22**](https://nea.org.uk/conference22)

POLICY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

MATT COPELAND, HEAD OF POLICY & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

It is fair to say that it has been a busy year so far for everyone in the Policy and Advocacy team at NEA. We are in an energy crisis. There has been a monumental price increase already this year in April, with the price cap increasing by £700 overnight. And analysts now expect that the price cap will rise by a further £800 in October. NEA saw an energy crisis on the horizon as we approached the end of Summer 2021, and have relentlessly campaigned for the Government to provide additional financial support to the poorest households ever since.

The Government response to the April price increase was inadequate. Millions of households could not afford to pay their bills before that increase, yet the Government offered just a £200 loan, and a £150 council tax reduction (which more than half a million low-income households would miss out on) in order to mitigate the crisis. While it was promising that the final decisions on the future of the Warm Home Discount (WHD) and the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) were made (longstanding NEA policy asks), these schemes were designed to meet pre-crisis issues, not to help households with new price increases.

After months more of fighting for more suitable support, towards the end of May, the UK Government came forward with a new package. This time, it was significantly better. NEA set a minimum requirement for the package: that it mitigate the predicted October price increase (£800) for low-income households. The Government mostly met this requirement, and in some cases exceeded it.

The £200 loan became a £400 grant for all electricity account holders. And additional, targeted support was offered. £650 for all households receiving a means-tested benefit. £300 for all households in receipt of the winter fuel payment and £150 for all households in receipt of a disability benefit. All households in receipt of a means-tested benefit would see the whole of the October price rise mitigated. A household in receipt of pension credit, who could access the council tax rebate, would see both the April and October price rises covered. The chancellor also confirmed that the uprating of benefits by inflation would go ahead as planned in April, something that was in doubt.

This was no doubt a big a win for anti-poverty campaigners across the UK and put a 'tick' next to NEA's most urgent policy priority.

While this package averts the darkest of outcomes, it does not end the energy crisis. Some will not be able to access the support needed. 25% of fuel poor households are not in receipt of a means-tested benefit. Many vulnerable people, whether living in rented properties, or within park homes, are not the holder of an electricity account so may not receive the benefit of the universal £400 grant. The energy bill grant will also be more difficult to access for prepayment users. These issues must urgently be ironed out to ensure that the package is as fair as it can be.

For NEA, there are a number of other areas we will now turn our focus to. We will continue to support fuel poor households through the energy crisis, seeking to address the health impacts of cold homes ahead of this winter through seasonal resilience plans and effective implementation of NICE guidance. We must make better progress to insulate fuel poor homes, with more funding, and better standards in place to make energy bills permanently more affordable for our clients. And we will ensure that overarching policy and regulatory frameworks work in the interest of fuel poor households, in particular seeking a social tariff for low income and vulnerable energy customers, to ensure a more affordable price of energy, in the context of an ongoing crisis.



NEA PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITY



In May NEA held our first in-person reception at the House of Lords since the COVID-19 pandemic. This was a fantastic opportunity to bring together parliamentarians, our members and supporters and industry colleagues to reflect on the difficult winter and update on our plans to support the most vulnerable households. Over 110 guests attended the reception which featured opening remarks from NEA chief executive Adam Scorer and our president Baroness McIntosh of Pickering. Adam thanked NEA staff and supporters for their efforts during the busiest winter for the organisation in memory and reiterated the need for collaboration with partners to protect the most vulnerable households over the coldest winter months. Lady McIntosh highlighted the importance of energy efficiency and reducing demand in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine drawing attention to energy security at home. Thank you to all our members and supporters who joined us in Parliament for this event.

SOCIAL TARIFF PARLIAMENTARY EVENT

The energy price crisis has shone a spotlight on the structural failings of the retail energy market to protect the poorest households. With a record 54% price cap increase from April, 6.5 million households have been plunged into fuel poverty. We met with a select group of MPs and peers in Parliament for a private briefing on the need for a social tariff in the retail energy market. A below market-rate social tariff would ensure that the most vulnerable households, including the 4.5 million on prepayment meters in the UK, would be shielded from wholesale gas price increases in future and not have to pay for the costs of supplier failings as currently happens.

We were pleased to be joined by representatives from anti-poverty NGO Fair By Design and energy supplier EON to demonstrate the broad coalition in favour of a social tariff. We are holding a further parliamentary event on Monday 4 July with speakers from across Parliament, industry and civil society on the Social Tariff, [registration here](#).

JOINT EVENT WITH THE FOOD FOUNDATION

Our chief executive Adam Scorer joined the Food Foundation's event on 'the food and fuel price squeeze' in late May. This timely event, chaired by former MP and Food Foundation chair Laura Sandys, sought to highlight the interlinkages between food insecurity and fuel poverty in the current cost of living crisis. The event also featured guest speakers with lived experience of both, providing an important reminder of the reality of everyday life for those struggling with rising prices and poverty.

TREASURY INTERVENTION TO SUPPORT RISING ENERGY BILLS

Before Whitsun recess at the end of May, Parliament's Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy select committee held the final evidence session for their inquiry into the failings of the energy retail market and the energy price crisis. Among other notable developments, Ofgem's chief executive Jonathan Brearley announced that the energy price cap is likely to rise again in October, bringing average annual bills to £2,800 and potentially pushing 12 million households into fuel poverty. Ofgem also announced that the energy price cap will be reviewed on a quarterly basis as opposed to every six months, meaning that whilst wholesale gas prices remain high households could potentially face more frequent price increases. NEA is pleased the government responded to these announcements with targeted financial support commensurate with the scale of the crisis. Most crucially, households on means-tested benefits will have the full price increase from October mitigated by Treasury, and the government heeded NEA advice to convert the 'heat now, pay later' loan into a non-repayable grant.



NORTHERN IRELAND

Political instability in Northern Ireland leaves low-income households at risk of being stranded without support

Throughout 2021 and early 2022 consumers in Northern Ireland have been exposed to an unprecedented rise in energy prices. Households now face on average combined energy bills of over £2000 per year.

On the 1st July, Northern Ireland's largest electricity company Power NI, is set to increase its prices for domestic customers by a further 27.5%. This will be the third price rise announced in the last 12 months and means that the average household will be required to pay an additional £204 per year. For gas customers the situation is even more acute. In Northern Ireland the average annual household gas bill has rocketed from £518 in April 2021 to £1,504 as of April 2022.

To add to an already challenging situation on 3 February 2022, DUP First Minister Paul Givan announced his resignation in protest against the Northern Ireland Protocol. Due to Northern Ireland's power-sharing arrangements, the roles of first and deputy first ministers are a joint office shared between the two biggest parties at Stormont; neither leader can stay in power if the other person resigns. The DUP decision prevented the Northern Ireland Executive from functioning properly, limiting the power of ministers to bring forward new legislation, including legislation to address the energy and cost of living crisis.

Following the chancellor's February announcement of a discount to energy bills across England, Scotland and Wales, and a Council Tax Energy Rebate in England; money was allocated to Northern Ireland through the Barnett

formula. This amounted to nearly £330 million in funding, which has yet to be allocated. NEA elieves that this funding must be committed to tackling the cost-of-living crisis, fuel poverty and helping the most vulnerable in our society during this time.

Thankfully a number of the additional support measures announced by the chancellor in May will go out to support those in Northern Ireland who meet the required criteria. This will include individuals in receipt of means-tested benefits and those of pensionable age. There is however still uncertainty over what 'equivalent support' will be provided to people in Northern Ireland as neither the £400 grant to help with the cost of energy bills nor the £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate will apply in Northern Ireland.

In response to the crisis NEA NI produced [10 Recommendations to tackle the Energy Crisis in Northern Ireland](#). This document was circulated to all political parties to inform the development of their party-political manifesto's ahead of the Assembly election on 5 May. We continue to advocate for the implementation of these 10 recommendations.

Unfortunately, the political stalemate remains and as a result the Northern Ireland Assembly has been unable to function following the election.

Work is now ongoing to seek alternative workarounds to allow the emergency support to be allocated to the most vulnerable households in Northern Ireland.





ENERGY ADVICE DROP INS

PROVIDING TIPS AND TRICKS TO KEEP YOUR ENERGY BILLS LOW AND YOUR HOME WARM.

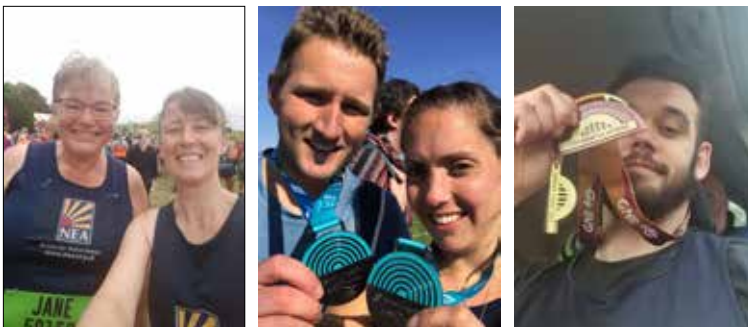
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JORDANTHORPE LIBRARY 9.30 TO 12.30 ON: TUESDAYS 28TH JUNE, 26TH JULY, 30TH AUGUST AND 27TH SEPTEMBER
LOWEDGES LIBRARY 1.30 TO 4.30 ON: MONDAYS 4TH JULY, 1ST AUGUST, 5TH SEPTEMBER & 3RD OCTOBER

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT :
07926 479161 (LOWEDGES) AND
0114 327 3400 (JORDANTHORPE)

Our delivery team are now back out into the community delivering partnership community sessions within the most disadvantaged communities via libraries, food banks and community groups who are now welcoming clients back to their centres after the restrictions of the pandemic have been lifted.

"It's great to be back out doing community work and looking at ways we can work in partnership within communities."



Want to support NEA? Why not take part in one of our half marathon events this year?

Once again Team NEA are putting on their running shoes and taking part in a number of world class running events and we want you to join us. With your help we can continue to raise vital funds to enable us to continue the work we do in helping those suffering in cold and unsafe homes across the UK. We still have places available at the iconic **Great North Run** on Sunday 11 September and London's most scenic event, **Royal Parks Half** on Sunday 9 October.

With your support we could help someone like John, John lived alone in what was described by his social worker as 'an unsafe and freezing cold environment'. He had been hard to engage with and felt isolated after being stuck at home for so long. The social worker noticed, when they entered his home, that it was very cold. John was wearing both a coat and a housecoat indoors to keep warm. He would also sleep downstairs on a chair with a duvet.

His phoneline and telecare were not working, along with his gas. There was no food in his cupboards either, he was living off a few packets of noodles which he had left.

As well as arranging for a number of support measures, his social worker referred him to NEA and we were able to arrange for a new central heating system, including asbestos removal, to be installed free of charge, making his home warmer and safer.'

Join Team NEA today and help NEA continue to help people like John.

Email alice.dagleish@nea.org.uk for more information.



WORK BEGINS AT FISHWICK

It's been a big year for our Warm and Safe Homes in Fishwick project which has now really come out of the starting blocks after a period of intense back-office work while adhering to all government Covid guidelines impacting on our in-person work and presence in the community. While we weren't able to visit the householders in their homes, a huge amount of work took place to enable work to start in May 2022.

Let's step back a little first to revisit what has happened. In order to help rectify residents' damp and mould issues following the 2013 failed external wall insulation scheme, we started by undertaking individual property surveys at the homes of the residents who responded to our questionnaire. The results of the surveys have formed the basis for the individually tailored plans for works to each house. The householders have had their opinion heard in the questionnaires and surveys alongside the professional building surveys done by project partner Aldrock identifying the remedial works to be carried out to the properties.

During a lengthy and robust tender process during autumn 2021, NEA worked hard to find and appoint the Main Contractor to work alongside us to put the properties right. In May we signed the contract with Seddon Construction to carry out the phase 1 work which will include 20 properties and will take 6 months. Since the start of this process, Seddon Construction showed a high level of interest and engagement in the project. NEA has always said that it was of utmost importance to work with a partner who understood the area and its people and Seddon is a local contractor with its head office in Bolton and with a history of operation of over 125 years. We have always been aware that this is a high-profile and risky project following the failings of the previous schemes going back to 2013.



Seddon Construction has a lot of experience in working on projects with external wall insulation (EWI) and especially on existing, occupied properties which complicates the process compared with working on unoccupied or new-build construction. Their experience covers both privately owned and rented properties and social housing. They are approved installers by SWIGA which will be providing the insurance-backed guarantees for the project and they have also worked on projects compliant with PAS2030 and PAS2035.

The scaffolding on the first property in Fishwick to get works done went up on 24 May to great cheer and positive reaction from all involved. From the beginning of the contract with Seddon Construction, each phase will now be completed in six months with capacity to do works on 40 properties per year. At the time of writing, three properties have now got works underway.



LAUNCH EVENT

On Friday 27 May, a launch event for the project was held at the Preston Community Hub on Samuel Street in Fishwick. Stakeholders and householders alike enjoyed a late lunch together and heard from local MP Sir Mark Hendrick and NEA's Chief Executive Adam Scorer as well as meeting other members of the NEA Fishwick team and exchanging views and experiences with each other. Local media attended and spoke to the residents – you can read their stories here:

- [LANCASHIRE LIVE](#)
- [BLOG PRESTON](#)

Fuel poverty charity begins work on damp homes in Fishwick | Blog Preston

If you're interested in finding out more about the project, please contact NEA's Project Manager Filipe Amarante at filipe.amarante@nea.org.uk



TECHNICAL & INNOVATION

Reducing household energy bills with solar PV

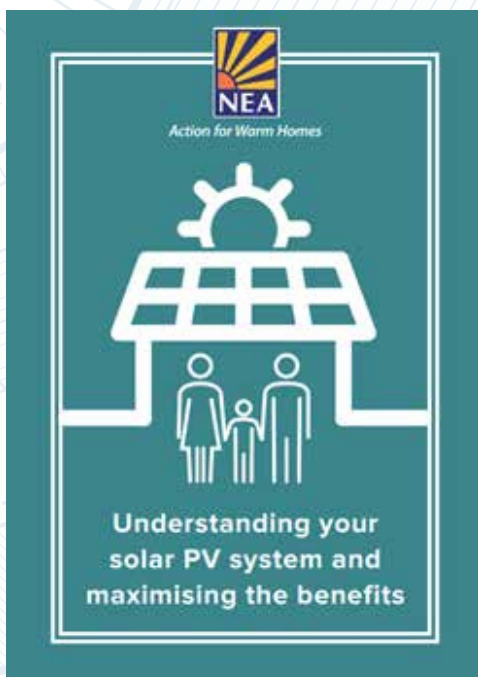
The Innovation and Technical evaluation team are working on several PV and battery storage projects at the moment, trialling technologies and evaluating other organisations' projects. We have projects across the country, but one of note is our own *Increasing self-consumption of solar PV* project, which has been funded by the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme (www.energyredress.org.uk). We have developed a series of advice materials about how solar PV systems work. These include an advice booklet, video and information on our website, and we are keen that as many people benefit from the materials as possible, so feel free to highlight it to others.

The solar PV advice booklet has been adapted to the needs of different social landlords and over 11,000 copies have been distributed to tenants with solar PV.

We are also providing telephone advice for households with solar PV to help them take advantage of their "free" electricity in the wake of high energy bills. We'll be able to offer this support throughout the summer months. Advice may include how to maximise the benefit from the solar panels and ways to check the PV system is call us for free advice on **0800 138 9023**.



www.nea.org.uk/solarpv
working correctly. Households can



Another aspect of the project has been providing households with small measures which can help them better understand their energy use alongside available PV-generated electricity, so they can maximise its use. We are trialling different types of monitors for solar PV and assessing their advantages and disadvantages. We are also installing some solar immersion controllers in homes which have hot water cylinders, so that electricity which would otherwise be exported to the electricity grid can be automatically diverted to the immersion heater, providing some free hot water. We will assess how beneficial households find the device and the savings they can produce.

We are planning to hold a webinar in July to discuss solar PV, monitors, solar immersion controllers and battery storage. Details will be available on the NEA website closer to the date.

Towards the turn of the year, we'll publish a comprehensive report which will share our findings and recommendations on best practice and useful complementary technologies from a technical and user perspective.

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

MEMBERS FOCUS

STAYING WARM TOGETHER

Support for South Asian communities

At the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), our dedicated team of energy advisers offer support to those struggling with high energy bills and cold homes. Our energy advisers hear from a wide range of people every day, but we found that the South Asian community is under-represented amongst referrals to our services.

Our research team created the '[Staying Warm Together](#)' project to understand more about why this is and how we can adapt our service to better support this community. Together with [Dhek Bhal, a community hub organisation that supports the South Asian community in Bristol and South Gloucestershire](#), and funded by City Funds and Quartet Community Foundation, we interviewed 12 households and hosted a roundtable meeting to agree recommendations for practice.

The people interviewed had multiple generations living under one roof, typically in larger owner-occupied or council-rented 3-5 bed homes, with high energy use and bills compared to smaller households. Concern about the health of older family members emerged as a promising entry point for uptake of support. Who took responsibility for home maintenance and paying energy bills varied – the older generation as home-owner, the main earner or shared cross-generationally.

We found multiple barriers to accessing support, including lack of awareness about available energy advice services, language concerns and cross-generational dynamics about responsibility for finances and for engaging with support outside the family.

[Visit the CSE website to find out more.](#) The full report sets out recommendations for support providers.

New research by AgilityEco estimates that the Government's statutory fuel poverty target will take until 2065 to achieve without further investment in energy efficiency – 35 years later than planned! Findings have been sent to government ministers, select committees, partners, stakeholders and press. For more information [click here](#).





With almost £2 billion of annual funding available to assist in energy efficiency and decarbonisation, so many of our most vulnerable households find themselves ineligible for assistance.

Though many meet the eligibility criteria, through no fault of their own they fall into the abyss of the untreatable, by being either commercially unviable, in the wrong EPC band or suffer from the postcode lottery of regional funding.

Without a fuel poverty scheme being available to these homes, easy measures can make a real difference by retaining valuable heat, saving precious energy and significantly improving the comfort levels of their living environment.

Draughtproofing, hot water cylinder jackets, LED bulbs, radiator reflector panels and standby shutdown devices are just some of the easy measures that can save energy, and keep the HEAT where it needs to be, especially as so many are now sadly reverting to one room living, being only able to afford to heat their core living space.

GTi Direct are a specialist supplier into the fuel poverty sector and are currently involved in several easy measures projects, which include the highly successful LEAP scheme, with either bulk or individual postal delivery being carried out.

Packages can be designed to suit client needs and budget and start from under £50 per property.

For further information or advice please contact: martin.clayton@gti-direct.com or info@gti-direct.com

Telephone :**01369 702020** Mob:07932 112020

As even more households are expected to slip into fuel poverty due to cost of living increases and the unprecedented rise in energy costs very real solutions need to be provided to help those that need it most.

Endo Enterprises working in partnership with The Sureserve Foundation and in collaboration with Sure Maintenance and Irwell Valley Housing, donated supplies of their EndoTherm product to tenants across Greater Manchester to help reduce their space heating fuel consumption.

Pat Coleman, Managing Director of Sure Maintenance said "Sure Maintenance always strives to assist our clients in enabling their tenants to cut costs and improve efficiency with their heating systems. The work of the Sureserve Foundation has provided us the fantastic opportunity of offering those tenants substantial savings, and at no cost to themselves. Endo Enterprises has proven to be an excellent partner with a groundbreaking product in EndoTherm and we are looking forward to working closely with them in the future".

EndoTherm is an Energy Saving Trust verified product which can be quickly added to any wet heating system with no interruption and has been proven to reduce energy consumption by up to 15%.

Do you manage properties or work with tenants who are likely to be facing the impossible choice between heating or eating? We want to continue to get EndoTherm installed into the heating systems of those that need it the most, visit www.endotherm.co.uk to find out more and get in touch via email (enquiries@endotherm.co.uk) or phone **01925 747101**.



SOLUTIONS TO TACKLE ENERGY POVERTY

A report has been published drawing on various reports about the work of the Solutions to Tackle Energy Poverty (STEP) project*, with a focus on STEP's work in the UK. STEP was an EU-funded Horizon 2020 project run by 11 consumer and research organisations across Europe. At its core, STEP provided energy efficiency advice to consumers in or at risk of fuel poverty. The advice was given through one-to-one meetings, phone calls, online training and dedicated workshops for energy poor consumers and frontline workers who supported such consumers.

Three local Citizens Advice: Reading, Manchester and Coventry, represented STEP in the UK. They aimed to use their experience to inform energy advice delivery throughout the Citizens Advice service and to advocate improved energy poverty policies by the UK government.

The three pillars of STEP were:

- **Advice** to consumers in or at risk of energy poverty
- **Training** for front line workers, e.g. in health, housing, social work, on how to advise consumers in or at risk of energy poverty
- **Advocacy** to national governments and EU institutions on energy efficiency and energy poverty

STEP achievements in numbers	All STEP partners	UK only
No of consumers receiving energy advice	16,600	3,229
% of consumers STEP helped in energy poverty	75%	76%
Avg bill savings/household/year	€124	€127
Total energy savings	38.4 GWh	6.3 GWh
Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions	8,970 tCO ₂ eq	954 tCO ₂ eq

Advocacy: STEP advocated many improvements to energy poverty policy. In summary, STEP recommended:

1. All member states should adopt an official definition of energy poverty
2. All member states should introduce a comprehensive strategy to eradicate energy poverty within legislation, including measurable targets, monitoring obligations and programmes to meet the target

3. Energy efficiency programmes should prioritise energy poor consumers, with all up-front costs covered and multi-unit buildings prioritised
4. All energy consumers should have access to reliable energy advice available through one-stop shops, phone lines and web, plus information on fuel bills on how to access advice
5. All member states should designate energy efficiency a national infrastructure priority and prioritise schemes that target households in or at risk of energy poverty

STEP's UK partners played an important role in informing STEP's advocacy work by drawing on the substantial legacy of energy poverty policy, both positive and negative, in the UK. STEP worked closely with the End Fuel Poverty Coalition in advocating improved policies in the UK, focusing mainly on England.

The future of energy advice in the UK

The report reflects upon energy advice provision in the UK and makes the case for reform to better support consumers in energy poverty and to meet net zero goals. It advocates the rationalisation of funding to ensure long term security, investment in services and retention of skilled advisers. It makes the case for integration of energy advice with other advice services and the development of shared advice tools and databases. But advice can only direct consumers to existing provision. Complementary and far-reaching programmes are needed to ensure consumers, particularly those in or at risk of energy poverty, can fully participate in the transition to net zero.

The full report, alongside all other STEP reports, will be available to download from www.stepenergy.eu/en/results/

* All STEP reports can be downloaded from the STEP website: www.stepenergy.eu/en/

CATAPULT
Energy Systems

Greener Homes Greener Lives

Greener Homes Greener Lives is a unique approach of combining retrofitting of a property and using behavioural science to encourage residents to make changes to reduce carbon emissions and to make changes to save energy resulting in lower fuel bills.

Over 200 vulnerable households living in Dudley Council owned properties have received energy efficiency and carbon reduction measures; this combined with energy advice, carbon reduction advice and a full needs assessment encompassing the household's health, mobility, well-being and finances provides a whole person-centred approach to enable residents to afford to live safe, warm and well in homes that they are proud of. This provision of bespoke solutions ensures that the actions taken have a lasting positive impact and make a genuine and tangible difference to the lives of residents battling fuel poverty.



The key to the success of the project is the close partnership with Dudley Council's own in-house energy advice service (DEAL) and Equans UK, the contractor. This collaborative partnership of working closely with residents combined with the provision of large-scale measures, forms a powerful collective front to reduce carbon emissions and tackle fuel poverty creating warmer and more energy efficient homes within the borough.

The measures, particularly the external wall insulation, have brought new life into tired old homes that were expensive to heat. Feedback from residents early in the process expressed a preference that they would prefer to keep the same original brickwork appearance. Wishing to take these views into account a brick effect render finish was used giving an extremely smart and attractive fresh look. The same residents have since commented that they love how their home looks, are proud to live there and are already noticing the benefits. One resident commented "Almost immediately I could turn down my thermostat".

The partnership between Dudley MBC and Equans UK has led to improved and efficient processes, increased success and valuable learning that is currently being shared with other landlords and local authorities. Our combined skills and expertise to provide an innovative approach to addressing fuel poverty, reducing carbon emissions, and providing quality retrofit measures underpinned with a good customer experience ensure that resident's homes are not only a home for life but also provide a legacy benefit for future vulnerable tenants.



WARM HOMES SUFFOLK

Suffolk councils have had a long history of working together on addressing fuel poverty in the county. We have established supplier relationships and excellent knowledge of the local populations and housing conditions. Each year we have been using the latest pot of funding to achieve installing measures for vulnerable households. So the latest £2.7m LAD2 funding meant we could continue having a positive impact, albeit only with 240 households.

We know that we haven't finished the work we need to do. We currently have a set of circumstances around rising energy prices and cost of living in general, that will not only push many more into fuel poverty but should also provide a catalyst for those who need help to come forward. With the scale of challenge becoming unprecedented with predictions of an increase from 50k to 140k households in Suffolk that we need to work with. Even at an optimistic £10k retrofitting cost per home we need a budget of £2.4M to meet the need!

When it comes to contacting eligible households we have traditionally

gone down the routes that many others do – using our databases, getting referrals from suppliers or other agencies and mailouts. But times have changed so in November when we found that our latest mailout of 200 letters gave us zero contacts we needed to reconsider the best approach. We wanted to address a couple of challenges with our marketing. Firstly we wanted to reach as many eligible households using different communication channels. Secondly we wanted to have an attractive branding that anyone could contact us through, and behind the scenes we would triage which scheme was the best for that household. Its hard enough for us as professionals to work out the differences between LAD 1a, 1b, SW, HUG, LAD2, EcoFlex, Eco3+ so we wanted to make it as easy as possible!

We commissioned a local agency, Spring, to deliver a marketing campaign, predominantly online, to invite suitable people - those living in the worst performing homes with the most need of support to get in touch and find out more about available grants. We talked through some of the barriers that often exist and explained how we wanted engagement that was positive, aspirational, and non-patronising. Rather than focus on the negative aspects of fuel poverty we focussed on the positive outcomes of the campaign and called it Warm Homes Suffolk. We were also aiming for broad communication that avoided too much complex eligibility criteria and language. We also have tried to raise the profile of the work politically so ensured the involvement e.g, the Chair of the Suffolk Environment Cabinet Members group Councillor Andy Drummond. He says that "With an imminent spike in energy costs for all households, Suffolk's authorities have joined together to offer valuable support and advice to residents. We want to assure people that help is out there, so that you don't have to live in a cold house, or become unwell, by worrying about your energy bills.". His message to the public was clear, "If you, or anyone you know is having difficulty heating their home, or is concerned about their energy bills, please get in touch with Warm Homes Suffolk."

Scale of challenge - Unprecedented

2019 est. 14.5 % of 350k households in fuel poverty¹

2022 post April Ofgem +50% price cap (average of £693 increase)²

2022 August price + 30%, fuel poverty now 40%³

¹ BEIS

² NEA

³ E.On

50k households



70k households
+20%



140k households?



Residents living in fuel poverty don't always know that they are, and mostly don't want to be associated with it. Older residents often have never relied on benefits and avoid engaging with authorities as they view it as failure. Younger residents tend to work and are looking to improve their standard of living. Those of working age most likely to qualify include a wide range of key workers, and Suffolk's large but low-paid hospitality sector.

We wanted to target audiences using the funding criteria – broadly an income less than £30k and/or on benefits. We knew also that these would be split across the owner-occupied and rented sectors. The majority of the target audience have smart phones for communication and connecting to the internet. We chose to use social media, particularly Facebook and Instagram, rather than traditional newspapers and TV.

The campaign was run over three months from January to March 2022 with resounding success. It has been our most successful campaign to date. The summary figures in that time were:

- 37950 people come to the website
- 52% have come from social (over 17500)
- 44% have come direct
- >700 online forms
- Over 1000 possible households

The engagement with the approach has continued since then and we have been processing the enquiries through to installations. Such has been the success we now have a pipeline of households ready for the next stage of funding and plan to run another campaign in late Summer.

Further details can be found at www.warmhomesuffolk.org

Dr Matthew Ling, Environment Strategy Manager,
Suffolk County Council. Email: matthew.ling@suffolk.gov.uk



Citizens Advice Torridge, North, Mid and West Devon have been advising clients on energy matters and would like to share the following case study

Our client had to give up his full-time job for mental health reasons and lived solely on Universal Credit. When he was working, the client was able to make his home more energy efficient by paying for solar panels and securing funding for a new roof, insulation and double glazing. However, despite these adaptations, the client now faces serious hardship due to the increasing energy costs. Living alone, the client is having to top up his meter by £10 every single day which can be up to 93% of his standard allowance payment on Universal Credit. The client is unable to change his meter as he had no choice but to borrow money from his energy supplier to help with the rising costs and now finds himself deciding between electricity and other essential items each month. On colder days, he is unable to afford to heat his 2-bedroom house and told us that he chose to sit in a shed with a small fan heater as this is more economical.

Whilst we were able to give our client energy saving advice, there was very little he could do to reduce his overall energy expenses.

However, with our support the client had a successful application for Limited Capability for Work Related Activity on his Universal Credit. This increased his income by £345.38 per month and improved his mental health by taking away the stress of looking for work where he was not fit to do so, and didn't have to go through that process alone. We are continuing to provide ongoing benefits advice.

We also issued fuel vouchers amounting to £98 under the Devon Household Support Fund, coordinated support from his local Foodbank and tackled some other issues that were impacting his overall mental health.

This client's story is just one example of how devastating the increase in energy prices can be and we are asking for the government to do more to stop this.