



Yorkshire and Humber Fuel Poverty Forum

21 June 2023



Action for Warm Homes

About NEA

National Energy Action (NEA) is the national fuel poverty and energy efficiency charity that has worked across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland for the last forty+ years, to ensure that everyone in the UK can afford to live in a warm and safe home.

We work across both the energy and water sectors, with frontline practitioners, companies, regulators and Government, to make positive change for customers in vulnerable circumstances.



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Time	Agenda
9:30am	Welcome Shelly McDonald, Project Development Manager, NEA
9:45am	Updates, collaboration and networking opportunities NEA will chair this session and invite participating speakers to share brief updates
10:30am	Policy update Maya Fitchett, Policy Analyst, NEA
11:00am	Refreshments and networking
11:20am	Group discussions Facilitated by NEA
11:50am	Energy champions programme Fran Belbin, Pitsmoor Adventure Playground
12:10pm	Speaker TBC TBC
12:25pm	Forum concludes Round up followed by lunch and networking

NEA is grateful to National Grid for supporting this round of Fuel Poverty Forums



Action for Warm Homes

How NEA has helped tackle the energy crisis (2022-23)

Our Warm and Safe Homes (WASH) Advice line operates across England and Wales, supporting thousands of people each year with energy and income maximisation advice and information.



Over **16,000 calls** answered through our phone lines
465 webchat conversations
Over **3,000** online referrals



1,872 clients have been supported with Benefit Entitlement Checks, of which **1,088 claims** were made resulting in over **£3.5 million** expected financial gains



Over 60% of clients supported had one or more health condition



11,151 clients helped with energy advice and support



Over £734,700 of crisis fund, hardship, bill support or debt relief payments administered by NEA



“Thank you so much, honestly, that has been keeping me up at night worrying so it’s a huge relief.” Single working mum, 34, who had £1,200 of fuel debt written off through the NEA support fund

“I couldn’t have got this sorted without you,” a client said after one of our advisers sorted out billing errors with her supplier to see her account move from debt to credit.

“Thank you so much for all your support,” a client who had been rationing her energy use said, after our adviser solved her complex metering and debt issues.

A 50-year-old mother of five, dependent on a ventilator and a wheelchair, had £1,204.13 of fuel debt wiped off, and her direct debit set to a more affordable amount, all thanks to one of NEA’s advisers.

A 62-year-old woman who had been selling her grandmother’s jewellery and borrowing money from friends to get by was helped by one of our advisers with both her energy and water bills. Our adviser got the woman onto a social tariff for her water bills and topped up her gas prepayment meter with a £147 voucher.



NEA's operational work programme 2023/24

- Communities of interest / supporting under-represented groups
- Smart meter rollout
- Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)



Communities of interest / supporting under-represented groups

Warm Welcome

- Providing vital energy advice and support to new and expectant parents in England and Wales
- Aiming to support families with managing their fuel bills and to achieve affordable warmth
- Community advice sessions and targeted support with professionals.

Building Community Resilience

- NEA and National Grid
- A greater focus on in-community work and direct support through partnership
- Working with partners who have been marginalised and face intersecting barriers in the energy market
- Tailored, local work to understand community needs and respond proactively
- Increase capacity across the advice giving sector.

Empowered by Energy

- NEA will continue to offer a unique energy awareness project to empower newly recognised refugees to the UK to overcome language barriers, understand new energy systems and save money.
- Interactive and in-depth workshops supported by translators covering a range of energy related topics and advice
- Delivered online and F2F
- Attendees become confident energy champions who can share tips and information with their peers and community networks.



Smart meter rollout

- Smart Energy GB in Communities is a grants and training programme established by NEA and Smart Energy GB in 2016
- Designed to reach and support people who might experience a barrier in benefiting from the smart meter rollout
- Provide funding to charities, local authorities and housing associations across Great Britain
- Promote the benefits of smart meters and bust myths
- Funding in 2023 is aiming to benefit people in fuel poverty; people who lack digital skills; and people who are carers. 3 smart meter focussed projects have received funding in this region.
- Free resources including a joint NEA/Smart Energy GB advice guide available on the Smart Energy GB website.

For more information: smartgrants@nea.org.uk

NEA and the Vulnerability & Carbon Monoxide Allowance (VCMA)

- Funding allowance for all Gas Distribution Networks (GDNs) allocated and managed by Ofgem
- To be used to support customers in vulnerable situations and to reduce the risks related to Carbon Monoxide
- Allocated according to the size of each GDN's customer base
- NEA is working in partnership with Cadent, Wales & West Utilities (WWU) and SGN to deliver VCMA funded programmes
- Programmes include gas appliance repairs/replacement and servicing, energy and water advice, benefits advice, fuel debt relief and emergency fuel vouchers.

Cadent – One Number Programme

- Referrals generated by engineers attending emergency call outs and carrying out mains replacement works
- Customers in vulnerable situations are referred to NEA (Eastern and North London network areas) or Groundwork (North West and North East network areas)
- Householders are offered:
 - FREE gas appliance repair/replacement or a FREE gas appliance service (subject to eligibility criteria)
 - Energy and water advice
 - A Benefit Entitlement Check and support to make a claim where required

Healthy Homes, Healthy People

Partnership approach across Wales & West Utilities footprint

- Energy advice
- Water tariff advice and access to cheaper tariffs
- Heating upgrades, access to top-ups, full support throughout
- Home adaptations – information and referrals
- Priority Services Register
- Home Safety Measures – CO, locking cooker valves
- Income maximisation





Cadent / SGN Collaboration

- Energy and water advice for SGN and Cadent customers:
 - Energy Debt support
 - Support to access water social tariffs and debt relief schemes
 - Priority Services – registration to supplier and operator Priority Service Registers
- Emergency fuel top-up vouchers fund for customers using the NEA Warm & Safe Homes (WASH) service living in an SGN or Cadent postcode area.
- Linked support to internal and partner organisations:
 - NEAs' Benefits Team
 - Network Operators Carbon Monoxide Alarms
 - Referrals to local foodbanks
 - Measures projects for insulation, heating and controls



Updates, collaboration and networking

Chaired by Shelly McDonald,
Project Development Manager,
NEA



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Policy update
Maya Fitchett,
Policy Analyst, NEA



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NEA's Three Advocacy Priorities



People - Supporting fuel poor households through the energy crisis



Homes - Achieving a fair and affordable transition to net zero



Market Frameworks - Ensuring overarching market, policy and regulatory frameworks work in the interest of fuel poor households

People - Supporting fuel poor households through the energy crisis

Recent Developments

- Price cap now down to £2,070 but Government energy support now ended (EBSS and EPG). So prices no different to winter
- 20% of prepay EBSS vouchers have not been redeemed to date. This will be passed back to HMT.
- Income support continues for those in the social security system. But this is defrayed across different essentials.
- One third of fuel poor households are not in the social security system and so receive no support going forward.

Coming Up

- Continuing to make the case for more targeted support this winter, specifically for energy (i.e. bill rebates/price support)
- Campaigning for a social tariff to ensure that low income households can access an affordable price of energy.
- Consultation on a social tariff expected this summer.

Homes - Achieving a fair and affordable transition to net zero

Recent Developments

- UK Government announced a new energy efficiency scheme – “Great British Insulation Scheme”
- More money allocated to Local Authorities and Housing Associations to deliver HUG and SHDF
- Government announced that it would look to rebalance levies on energy bills.
- UK Government debating whether to tighten energy efficiency standards for landlords to meet.

Coming Up

- Making the case for fuel poverty schemes (including GBIS) to be targeted on fuel poor households. This includes our work with political parties on their manifestos.
- Working with UK Government officials to ensure that current schemes work as well as possible.
- Ensuring that the UK Government does not rebalance energy bills simply through transferring levies to gas bills.
- Building up case studies of private renters.

Market Frameworks - Ensuring overarching market, policy and regulatory frameworks work in the interest of fuel poor households

Recent Developments

- Ofgem have consulted on making some changes to energy pricing, including:
 - How debt allowances are calculated in the price cap
 - Pricing differentials for different payment types
- New voluntary agreements regarding the forced installation of prepayment meters.
- Ofgem consulting on how to improve customer service.

Coming Up

- Continuing to make the case that there should be no/limited price differentials between payment types in the energy market.
- Pushing Ofgem to take the PPM voluntary agreement into the licence.
- Ensuring that energy customers do not pay over the odds for the cost of debt in the price cap

Forced Prepay – Deep Dive

New Rules for Pre Installation

- Involuntary PPM as a last resort
- Multiple contact attempts by a range of methods and site welfare visit before Involuntary PPM
- Installs must be smart meters as default

Exemptions from the process

- High risk group completely exempt from installs, including elderly, very young, and certain medical conditions.
- Broader medium risk group exempt if likely they will self-disconnect

On site requirements


- Site welfare visit and installation teams to be appropriately trained, with clear expectations on their behaviour
- There is a need for bodycam or audio recording

New Rules for Post Installation

- New Involuntary PPM to come pre-loaded with credit
- Suppliers must provide aftercare including check ins and monitoring of top ups/consumption
- Households must be offered to be moved back to credit mode if debt is cleared

Forced installs will not re-commence until suppliers have shown to Ofgem that they can meet these requirements. This is not expected until mid-summer at the earliest.

What else is happening?

- **New Select Committee Established for DESNZ** – Angus MacNeil will chair the committee. NEA is engaged with helping the committee shape their initial agenda.
 - **Review of Electricity Market Arrangements (REMA)** – UK Government is looking at changing how the wholesale market works. Some of this will directly impact fuel poor households, so NEA will remain engaged.
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Indicative Policy Timeline

Summer 23/24

- Consultations on a social tariff and rebalancing energy bills
- GBIS goes live

Spring 24/25

- Implementation of a social tariff
- Preparation for election (possible May 2024)

Autumn 23/24

- Winter price cap announced with decisions on debt/levelisation
- Prepay agreement into the licence?
- Party conferences – focus on manifesto commitments



Refreshments and networking



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Group discussions



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In smaller groups, please discuss:

Involuntary Prepayment Meter (PPM) – Supplier Code of Practice

- Ofgem's Involuntary PPM Supplier Code of Practice includes a number of characteristics/conditions that should be considered as high or medium risk and therefore exclude them from Involuntary PPM or remote mode switching. Do you think there are other categories which have been missed? If so, what would be your rationale for including them?
- How can we best explain to advisers and/or householders what protections the Code of Practice offers?
- Does the Code of Practice provide sufficient protection? If not, what more could it do?

Digital exclusion and accessibility

- NEA is still finding digital exclusion to be a significant barrier in people being able to access services. What needs to be in place to resolve this? Can you share examples?

Staff welfare

- Demand from clients for in-depth support is likely to continue and as we've seen this can have a significant impact on advisers' health and wellbeing. What mechanisms do you have in place to protect your staff's welfare? Can you share anything that worked well last winter?
- We recognise that not everyone works as part of a large team – how can we support colleagues who are working in isolation?
- Is there more that you'd like to see NEA do to support you on a peer-to-peer level?



Energy champions programme

Fran Belbin, Pitsmoor Adventure
Playground



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Training



Action for Warm Homes

Large suite of short courses or qualifications to help enhance knowledge and practical understanding about fuel poverty, fuel debt, decarbonisation and vulnerability.

Funded places available for frontline staff or volunteers (for non-commercial organisations)

www.nea.org.uk/training



NEA Membership



Action for Warm Homes

Everything we do, we do in partnership and our members are the heart of those partnerships.

- The **Business Supporters Group** has been in existence for over 20 years. A strong relationship with the business community is vital to ensure the fuel poor can benefit from current schemes and technological developments. NEA's campaigning activities would not be so effective without industry support.
- Our **Supporting and Enhanced Membership** include local authorities, housing associations, health agencies, charities, community groups and contracted installers through energy provider schemes. **Supporting membership is FREE!**

NEA relies on its members, both as a source of income and for support in achieving the charity's aims and objectives. More information about benefits and costs can be found on our website.


NEA Annual Conference and Exhibition

This year's conference will be taking place from
4 - 6 December 2023
at the **Leicester Tigers' Stadium** in Leicester.

To join the mailing list for updates and early-bird booking rates,
go to **www.nea.org.uk/annual-conference-2023/**



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Thank you for attending and for your contributions. We'd be grateful if you can complete an evaluation form & hand this back to a member of NEA staff.

Please stay for lunch & further networking.



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