



NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION



IMPACT REPORT

APRIL 2022 TO MARCH 2023

MESSAGE FROM NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION CHIEF EXECUTIVE ADAM SCORER

This report covers a year of negative budgets, building debt, cutting off, not cutting back, of stress and a plummeting quality of life for millions.

The scale and complexity of issues faced by people in fuel poverty has been overwhelming. For the people who came to National Energy Action (NEA) and others for help. For those who suffered in silence without someone to fight their corner.

We looked to fight their corner every day in every way that we could. The brilliant people who power National Energy Action have shown the passion, professionalism and resilience that the crisis demanded.

The simplest thing to do is to point to the personal stories and case studies that show the value of our support to those we were able to help directly. But the challenge of 7.5 million households in fuel poverty in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, needs a bigger response. Our campaigners, researchers, trainers, project coordinators, advocates and everyone who supports them to do their jobs are all on the frontline. All fighting the corner of those in fuel poverty.

We had some important targets for the year. We wanted to consolidate our multi-channel advice service, supporting more households and opening up our service to increasing numbers of webchat and online referrals.

Our work in and with communities has always been a core part of who we are. It has taken us some time to re-establish that activity, post-Covid. Not everyone who needs support will be able or feel comfortable in coming forward. We need to reach out to them as well.

The pace of change in demand, support packages and low carbon solutions made education, awareness and training ever more important. Keeping frontline advisers up to speed

THE ENERGY CRISIS 2022 TO 2023

- **7.5 million UK households in fuel poverty – unable to stay warm, safe and healthy at home.**
- **Typical bills increased from £1,250 to £2,500.**
- **Cost-of-living crisis means lower incomes and higher prices. More people have a negative budget.**
- **Next year, typical bills will still be £1,000 higher than pre-crisis.**

We will have to step up again in 2023 and 2024. Do more. Help more. Partner more. Push harder.

However many times we say that 2022 to 2023 was exceptional, the truth is that we will repeat the experience over the next year.

and helping new ones get to grips with the issues.

We had been desperate to return to our in-person annual conference. They are hugely important to us, bringing together all those tackling fuel poverty. We needed to go online in September, but we emerged into the January light in Birmingham, and it was marvellous to do so.

Above all, we wanted to make sure that the insight, evidence and stories from everything we do had traction through our advocacy and influence. There are vital lessons to be learned from this crisis. It has exposed weaknesses across the system and NEA did everything we could to expose those weaknesses and present positive solutions.

However many times we say that 2022 to 2023 was

exceptional, the truth is that we will repeat the experience over the next year. Energy bills will stay £1,000 higher than pre-crisis levels for typical households and other essentials will remain priced out of millions of people's budgets. The elastic has been impossibly stretched for charities like NEA. We will have to step up again in 2023 and 2024. Do more. Help more. Partner more. Push harder.

We have been taken aback by the generosity of donors and industry supporters. In particular, the number of individuals wanting to support us has been humbling and motivating in equal measure.

Staff and Trustees make NEA an exceptional place to be, a powerful advocate for the fuel poor and a relentless force for good. I feel blessed to be part of it.



COVER PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTOGRAPHY: TYNESIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

HOW NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION HAS HELPED TACKLE THE ENERGY CRISIS

Our Warm and Safe Homes Advice (WASH) line operates across England and Wales, supporting thousands of people every year with energy and income maximisation advice and information. Our team of dedicated advisers has never been more needed as prices spiralled amid the energy crisis. They offered support on a huge range of issues including energy efficiency, Priority Services Register, smart meters, supplier complaints, billing issues, energy debt, grants and rebates, income maximisation and much more. Their advice has helped more people than ever. People have been able to keep the lights on and the heat in. Throughout the report you will see stories from just a few of the people we helped in 2022 and 2023.



OUTCOMES ACHIEVED FOR CLIENTS



Over £1million in repair and replacement services helping 551 households stay warm.



1,873 clients have been supported with Benefit Entitlement Checks, of which 1,088 claims were made securing over £3.1 million in confirmed gains, with a further £398,690 in unconfirmed gains. The average gain is £3,234 per year per client supported through the claim process.



Over 60% (almost two-thirds) of clients supported had one or more health condition. This is across all advice streams, so includes energy and benefits.



Total financial outcomes of energy advice, including bill support and savings was over £520,000. Where tenure was specified, 53% of those we helped were in social housing, and 15% were private renters.

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5

TOTAL: 11,511 PEOPLE SUPPORTED WITHIN ENERGY INFORMATION AND/OR ADVICE



7,978 clients have been supported with one-to-one energy advice and support. There were over 11,200 issues/cases.



Our triage team has taken over 16,000 calls through our WASH advice line, 3,066 online referrals, 465 online webchat conversations.



We have issued £734,472 in direct support, either as a prepay top-up, a credit to prevent self-rationing or energy debt relief.



3,173 people have been supported by our operations team through events, both face-to-face and online, across the UK.



PARK HOME CLIENT HELPED AFTER THEIR BILL ROSE 311%

Living in a park home, a 79-year-old retired man found he and his partner were excluded from vital government energy bill support. At the time the client came to National Energy Action for help, the Energy Bills Support Scheme was not easy to access for park home residents and the Alternative Fuel Payment had not been set out by the government. The client calculated his energy bills had risen from £884 to £3,642 a year - an increase of 311%. Our adviser was able to signpost the client to a range of other possible support. The client was able to apply for the £200 Welsh government Fuel Support Scheme along with pensioner cost-of-living payments, winter fuel payment and disability cost-of-living payments. In addition, the issue was highlighted to our policy team so they could raise this gap in the Energy Bills Support Scheme to the government.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK

5 KEY PROJECTS

We've worked on many projects over the year to help vulnerable and marginalised communities. Supporting people on-the-ground continues to be a priority for us. Here are just five of the projects we've worked on:

1. GYPSY, ROMA, TRAVELLER PROJECT

With the support of Friends, Families and Travellers and the Which? Fund, we've been working to strengthen energy advice and support for Gypsy, Traveller, Roma and other Nomadic Communities, such as Boaters. Our research has gathered vital insights through a Call for Evidence with key organisations and services, as well as a householder survey, interviews, diaries, a Roundtable event, and in-person workshops to produce a set of resources, including a community co-produced guidance document, to better understand and improve energy-related support for these communities. This project will be completed in August 2023.

2. WARM WELCOME

Our Warm Welcome project provided on-the-ground support to pregnant women and new parents. Trying to keep homes at a safe temperature for babies – between 16 and 20 degrees is hard for families in fuel poverty and the arrival of a baby into a family already experiencing hardship, can greatly increase the risk of fuel poverty.

The Warm Welcome project delivered community advice sessions to families in need. It also provided training for frontline professionals to identify fuel poverty. Overall it helped 867 households.

3. WINTER WARMTH SUPPORT PACKS

Since autumn 2022 we've put together Winter Warmth Support Packs for our most vulnerable and at-risk clients.

Each pack contains small, household energy-efficiency items that can be used to help stay a little warmer at home during the cold winter months. This includes radiator strips, draught excluders and a wearable blanket, as well as a vacuum flask so they only need to boil the kettle once a day. The packs have been distributed to young families, pensioners and people with disabilities. They are no substitute for a targeted financial support package from the UK government, but they have made a real difference to our vulnerable clients.

4. LEICESTER

Since January 2023, our Leicester-based team has been working with vulnerable people in the city, offering on-the-ground support, including:

- One-to-one affordable warmth and energy efficiency telephone advice
- Group energy advice presentations and workshops
- Fuel debt support, helping with understanding bills and getting the most suitable payment options and meters
- Top-up support or signposting to local forms of financial assistance, such as the Household Support Fund
- Educational opportunities in primary schools
- Community development and a network for Energy Champions
- City & Guilds-accredited Energy Awareness courses and short webinar training for frontline workers and volunteers.

The project, funded by NHS Integrated Care, and delivered in partnership with Leicester City Council (public health) and National Energy Action, has made a huge difference to people's health and wellbeing.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK/TYNESIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY



PEOPLE WE'VE HELPED

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 our advisers.



5. FISHWICK

National Energy Action has completed a first phase of work on homes in Fishwick, Preston on 22 homes, to rectify problems of severe damp and mould.

We worked with delivery partners Aldrock and Seddon, Preston City Council and the project was made possible with funding for insulation measures from Affordable Warmth Solutions.

We have installed new solid wall insulation correctly, with a 25-year insurance-backed guarantee.

“Because of the fungus (in the house) I'm suffering with a fungus on my lung. So, they are treating me in Manchester hospital and last time I nearly died because there was so much fungus on my lungs.”
Fishwick resident

Householders have been living with severe problems following the poor installation of external wall insulation, carried out as part of a national energy efficiency scheme in 2013.

In May 2022, we held a public engagement event at Preston Community Action Hub. NEA and the MP for Preston, Sir Mark Hendrick, explained the next steps to householders and the local community, giving Fishwick residents the opportunity to speak face-to-face with NEA representatives.

The work involved removing the existing failed insulation, addressing any structural problems caused to the properties, and fitting new solid wall insulation taking great care to ensure that the weatherproof detailing was sufficient to avoid the risk of any further problems. Mechanical ventilation was included, both to comply with building regulations requirements and to help improve the indoor environment of the buildings over the long-term.

The process included insurance-backed guarantees for

the insulation work.

Twenty-two properties are now complete and a second phase is underway. However, over 300 properties were thought to have been affected in Fishwick and further funding is needed to rectify all properties where problems were experienced.

Lessons learned

This project emphasises the significantly increased cost of not getting energy efficiency measures right in the first place. In this rectification project the external wall insulation and associated work was 60% of the total project costs. If the external wall insulation work and costs had been similar in the first place (despite the likelihood that costs, and corners, were cut) then it has cost nearly three times as much to end up with the correct solution than it would have been to do it right in the first place. And that's even without considering the years of unhealthy living and distress that have been forced onto the occupants, as well as the cost to them of trying to fix the problems themselves.

ADVOCACY

The typical cost of energy in April 2023 reached about 2.5 times pre-crisis costs. By March 2023, 7.5 million households were living in fuel poverty. National Energy Action (NEA) has responded to these unprecedented challenges by being a more powerful voice for further action to protect the poorest households and, where possible, conveying their own direct experiences of the energy crisis to ensure they get adequate support with energy bills.

OUR FOCUS:

- Securing the Energy Price Guarantee, limiting the typical energy bill to £2,500, alongside the Energy Bills Support scheme, a £400 energy bill rebate for all households.
- Securing a temporary ban on the forced installation of prepayment meters, accompanied by a strengthening of the rules governing such installations, ensuring that households with health conditions that make them vulnerable to the cold will never have a prepayment meter forced upon them.
- Prompting the UK government to commit to introducing new consumer protections in the energy market, including the potential for a social tariff, from April 2024.
- Prompting the UK government to commit to eliminate the premium faced by prepayment customers indefinitely from July 2023.
- Securing a significant package of expanded crisis support in Wales to help households with their energy costs.
- Continuing to work with the Welsh government on the implementation of its Tackling Fuel Poverty Plan and influencing

the development of the next iteration of its Warm Homes Programme to improve the energy efficiency of fuel poor homes in Wales.

- Coordinating an 'Emergency Winter Vulnerability Response' Group in Northern Ireland to agree common principles and identify collective actions that could be put in place ahead of the winter, to ensure that there was at least some level of support for vulnerable

consumers.

- Pushing the Northern Ireland Department of Communities to initiate the process to produce a new updated fuel poverty strategy.
- Campaigning for the UK government to spend more resources to increase the energy efficiency of fuel poor homes, resulting in £1bn in additional funding for fuel poverty schemes in Great Britain over the next three years.



PHOTOGRAPHY: TYNESIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

PRICE CAP

October 2022 saw the price cap increase to stratospheric levels. Without support from the UK government, the typical bill would have reached £3,549. It would have breached £4,000 in December. This would have seen the number of households spending more than 10% of their income on energy reach more than 10 million. Our advocacy for winter support resulted in the Energy Price Guarantee, subsidising everyone's bills so that the typical annual energy cost was £2,500/year. This was supplemented by the Energy Bills Support Scheme, a £400 energy bill rebate available to all households over winter – a much improved scheme compared to the initial £200 loan scheme it replaced, which NEA campaigned tirelessly to turn into a grant. Going into the year ahead, we have already secured a commitment from HM Treasury to permanently eliminate the financial premium faced by prepayment meter customers from July 2023.

OUR ALL PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Our successes have been, in part, achieved through our continued engagement with Westminster All Party Parliamentary Group for Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty and the Senedd's Cross Party Group on Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency in Wales, building momentum and consensus to ensure that sufficient financial support be made available to households over winter. Among other work, these political coalitions have also been instrumental in increasing the political pressure regarding the unfair forced installation of prepayment meters into vulnerable households. In Northern Ireland, NEA had been close to establishing an All Party Group on fuel poverty before the collapse of the NI Assembly. Once the Assembly resumes, the APG is ready to become an official group.

DECADE OF DELIVERY

We continue to push for this to be a decade of delivery, putting an end to needless energy waste in our homes. Improved energy efficiency is more vital now than ever and is a significant opportunity to address the cost-of-living crisis. However, the latest fuel poverty statistics show that the 2020 fuel poverty milestone, for all fuel poor households in England to reach EPC E by 2020, has been missed. There are still 191,000 fuel poor households living in the worst properties, paying over £1,000 per year more than they would be if they had been upgraded to a reasonable standard of energy efficiency already. While an additional £1 billion funding for energy efficiency grants has been secured through the Great British Insulation Scheme, it is unlikely that it will make a significant impact for fuel poor households. 80% of the funding for the schemes is aimed squarely at the 'able to pay' market, assuming household contributions of 10% of total costs.

Unless addressed, the lack of progress in decarbonising fuel poor homes will continue to put the delivery of the UK government's legally binding fuel poverty commitments at risk. It will also add to the cost-of-living pressures which expose millions of vulnerable low-income households to future energy crises and will undermine the UK government's aim to reach net zero.



"I couldn't have got this sorted without you,"

A client said after one of our advisers sorted out billing errors with her supplier. Her account went from being in debt to credit.

OFGEM

We have challenged the GB regulator, Ofgem, to ensure that its decisions are in the interests of vulnerable households. While we were not able to stop the price cap being updated more often, we have been able to guide the regulator in taking tough enforcement decisions when energy companies have broken the rules, and even impose a temporary ban on the forced installation of prepayment meters, and a strengthening of the energy market rules.

As well as challenging the UK government and GB regulator, we've helped influence opposition parties' own proposals to combat the impact of the energy crisis. We've worked particularly hard to influence how those in Northern Ireland and Wales have responded to the crisis. This has resulted in enhanced protections for low-income and vulnerable consumers to access additional crisis support.

MEDIA

The energy crisis continued to dominate the news agenda and has meant that there have been more voices competing to be heard. We are still the go-to organisation for comment and statistics on fuel poverty. We more than doubled our media appearances from the previous year.



NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION APPEARED IN THE MEDIA 22,595 TIMES



This is made up of:

17,748 Broadcast appearances and mentions.

4,847 print/online mentions, quotes and op eds.

UP FROM 9,907 IN 2021-22

Our coverage was a result of both reactive comments and proactive stories to drive our policy agenda. On 1 April 2022 when the typical bill increased to £1,971 we had 1,273 media mentions including appearances on the BBC News Channel, Sky News and LBC, as well as coverage on the front page of the FT, and in articles in the Mail, the Times and the Mirror.

On 1 October, when the typical annual energy bills increased to £2,500, under the Energy Price Guarantee, we had 1,313 appearances. This included BBC Breakfast and Radio 4's Moneybox. We were also covered by PA, in the Daily Mail, LBC, ITV, the Independent and 250 other local and regional papers.

Our single biggest day of coverage was 26 August, the day Ofgem announced that prices would rise to £3,549 for a typical annual bill from October. National Energy Action's reaction to this was mentioned 1,802 times, with appearances on Sky News and our reaction covered by the Mail, the Independent, the Times, the I, the Mirror, and more.

Other highlights from the year include appearing on Rip-Off Britain, The One Show, and working with Martin Lewis to be named as part of his coalition of

organisations calling for the government not to raise the Energy Price Guarantee. We also held a Q and A with Mumsnet, reaching their 8 million monthly users.

A theme of this year was successful proactive joint press releases. At the end of September, we worked with Food Foundation on a release about parents cutting back on food due to high energy bills. This saw coverage on Good Morning Britain, Sky News, BBC website, Guardian, Express, Financial Times, Mirror and PA, among others, with 803 mentions.

We also worked with Scope on a story about changes to the Warm Home Discount leaving half a million households ineligible. It was covered by ITV, the Guardian, the Mail, the Sun, the Independent and more, appearing 250 times.

We were also signatories of an open letter with Age UK, Scope and Fair By Design calling on the government to introduce a social tariff. This was covered by the Guardian, the Mirror, the

Express, the Independent, Bloomberg and PA, among others, appearing 341 times.

Our Fuel Poverty Awareness Day took place on 2 December 2022. We announced that 8.4 million households would be in fuel poverty come April, without government support. Thankfully, since then the government stepped in, see page 6). We targeted exclusives with the BBC and ITV then sent the release widely, gaining 474 mentions.

The case study database continued to grow, with our case studies featured in stories throughout the year, including coverage in ITV, BBC, Reuters, Sky News, the Mail, the Independent and more.

We worked with the Fundraising and Partnership team on many new projects. This included working with songwriter Eliot Kennedy who wrote a Christmas single for us. He promoted our work on Sky News and in magazines. Campaign Collective and filmmaker Felix both made adverts for us, and we used both of these to promote our work.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SHUTTERSTOCK

SOCIAL MEDIA

We've continued to grow our users and reach on all social media channels. Facebook and LinkedIn almost doubled in reach. We put on just over 4,500 followers across the platforms over the 12 months which equates to the entire following of our LinkedIn, Instagram and Cymru accounts.



TWITTER/X

Followers added: **2,649**
Total mentions: **4,924**
Total reach: **2,032,000**
Total profile visits: **389,994**



LINKEDIN

Followers added: **930**
Total reach: **99,901**
Total reactions: **2,247**
Total shares: **314**



FACEBOOK

Followers added: **536**
Total reach: **226,628**
Total reactions: **4114**



NEA CYMRU X

Followers added: **96**
Total reach: **107,301**
Total mentions: **126**
Total profile visits: **14,424**



INSTAGRAM

Followers added: **305**
Total reach: **19,059**



WEBSITE

Impressions: **6,040,000**
Google ranking: **1st**



REACH COMPARISON TO LAST YEAR

Twitter: **1,363,300 (increase of 668,700)**
Facebook: **120,159 (increase of 106,469)**
LinkedIn: **52,568 (increase of 47,333)**
Instagram: **529 (increase of 18,500)**

We reached 2,484,889 accounts, up by 841,002 accounts from last year.

PEOPLE WE'VE HELPED

“Thank you so much for all your support,”

A client who had been rationing her energy use, after our adviser solved her complex metering and debt issues.



EVENTS

This year we held not one but two conferences. Our original conference was scheduled for 8 September. Because of Her Majesty the Queen’s funeral, we rearranged the conference to a one-day online event, and our in-person event – the first since 2019 – was held on 23 to 25 January.

With just three working days’ notice, our online conference featured 35 speakers and 510 attendees. The conference was screened on YouTube, with a further 210 views. We had 36,000 impressions on Twitter.

For our in-person conference, Tackling the Energy Crisis Together, in January, we held eight sessions three of which were break-outs. We had 38 speakers and 319 delegates. A key feature of our conference was the ‘living experience’. We tweeted throughout conference using the hashtag #EnergyCrisisConf. We totalled over 58,000 impressions.

Other events this year included the SEGB forums, with 73 attendees, the England Fuel Poverty Forums, with 343 members, the Wales-wide Fuel Poverty Forums with almost 350 attendees. We also held our House of Lords event on 9 May with over 100 attendees.

PEOPLE WE'VE HELPED

SINGLE MUM WITH MEDICAL CONDITION HELPED WITH DAMP AND MOULD

A 46-year-old woman lives with her 17-year-old daughter in a rented council flat. She has sickle cell anaemia which is made worse when she is cold. Her daughter has asthma which also gets worse in colder weather. She works part-time and has struggled with the rising cost of living, meaning she often rations the heating. The flat has one of the worst cases of damp and mould our adviser has ever seen, so bad that the hospital discharge team didn’t want to release her back to the property.

Our adviser got her meter topped up, as well as sending a warmth pack to her and getting her onto the Priority Services Register. Our adviser also got in touch with the council, who responded quickly, categorised the case as urgent and agreed to send a surveyor from their rapid response team.

She sent a text message saying: ‘Thank you so much’ ♥

PHOTOGRAPHY: TYNESIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

RESEARCH

During 2022 and 2023 the research team has worked across 20 separate research and evaluation projects

To represent the lived experience of fuel poverty and practice-based experiences of frontline professionals and stakeholders, the research team has:

- Surveyed almost 4000 households
- Interviewed approx. 80 households
- Engaged with over 200 stakeholders
- Delivered 20 focus groups (households and stakeholders)

THE RESEARCH TEAM HAS PUBLISHED: 9 HIGH QUALITY REPORTS, BRIEFINGS AND ACADEMIC JOURNALS. THESE INCLUDE:

- Cadent Foundation Reactive Response Evaluation available: <https://cadentgas.com/nggdwsdev/media/media/documents/Reactive-Response-Evaluation-FULL-REPORT-1.pdf>
- Making heat pumps work for fuel-poor households – a guide. Available here: <https://www.nea.org.uk/publications/making-heat-pumps-work-for-fuel-poor-households/>
- Warm Homes Fund Evaluation and Blueprint – available here: <https://www.nea.org.uk/researchpolicy/whf-evaluation/>
- British Medical Journal Opinion - The Cost of Keeping Warm and the Price of Inadequate Policy <https://www.bmj.com/content/379/bmj.o2461>
- Hydrogen for domestic heating: a preliminary analysis for the Hydrogen Integration for Accelerated Energy Transitions (HI-ACT) Centre. Available here: https://www.scisci.ac.uk/media/Media_869226_smxx.pdf

NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION WERE ON ADVISORY BOARDS, BOARDS OF TRUSTEES, AND WORKING GROUPS, INCLUDING:

- Durham Energy Institute
- Trustee of Essential Services Action Network
- Trustee of the Fuel Poverty Research Network
- UK government cross-sectoral/departmental Health and Housing Working Group
- Public Health Wales’ Satisfactory Heating Regime Review
- EDI+ A research, innovation and training network for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the energy research community (Durham University)

SUPPORTING NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION TO HAVE A LOUDER VOICE, THE RESEARCH TEAM HAS:

Presented at over 10 conferences, seminars, podcasts and workshops, including:

- Housing 2022, the Chartered Institute of Housing’s annual conference
- Award winning Local Zero podcast available here: <https://www.localzeropod.com/episodes/energy-advocacy-services-in-a-time-of-crisis-3d9ed-vZtca-rf5sx>
- Include (Research centre for socially inclusive energy transitions) Project Climate Emergency! Energy Crisis International Symposium international symposium at Durham University
- Public Policy Exchange: Addressing Cold Weather Planning & Fuel Poverty: Insulating Homes, Supporting Energy Customers & Protecting the Most Vulnerable & the NHS
- ‘Cut Costs and Save the Planet’ - Energy Plus Academy (partnership between the London School of Economics and the National Communities Resource Centre) Think Tank Knowledge Exchange workshop.
- Lectures to an EPSRC centre for training of PhD students in renewable energy and MSc Sustainability, Energy and Development.

WALES



Ben Saltmarsh, head of NEA Cymru, says: 'This past year has seen record numbers of households in Wales fall into fuel poverty, and the hardship of those already in it deepen significantly.'



WELSH GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED A PACKAGE OF EXPANDED MEASURES, INCLUDING:

- A second Welsh Fuel Support Scheme payment of £200, expanded to reach significantly more households in need and made available ahead of winter, to help save households going without essential heat and power in the coldest months.
- The extension of emergency support available via the Discretionary Assistance Fund to help off-gas households in financial hardship top up oil and LPG.
- A Wales-wide Fuel Voucher Scheme to help households in crisis who must pay for their energy in advance.
- Publicly support many of our calls of the UK government and Ofgem to take meaningful, concerted and targeted action.

Alongside this, we have continued to engage closely on the future of the Welsh government's Warm Homes Programme; its key delivery mechanism to help tackle fuel poverty in Wales, improving home energy efficiency for those most in need and supporting a fair, affordable transition. There is an urgent need to upgrade the energy efficiency of fuel poor homes in Wales. A new, demand-led scheme to replace Nest, focused on fuel poor households, is expected to be procured by the end of 2023. Its ambition and delivery will be vital to lifting households out of fuel poverty, making the homes of those in need much warmer, greener, healthier places to live, with energy bills that are permanently low.

In all of this, we have worked very closely with Welsh government and Members of the Senedd across the political spectrum, leading on the development of key recommendations for decision-makers. We've met regularly with ministers, provided ongoing advice to the First Minister and his Cost-of-Living Cabinet Sub-Committee, presented at Welsh government's Cost-of-Living Summits, influenced key Senedd debates, and gave evidence at Senedd Committees on key issues including energy efficiency and forced installation of prepayment meters in vulnerable homes.



PEOPLE WE'VE HELPED

"I received my top-up voucher by post on the 21 December. They must have had a problem topping up my smart meter. I was so grateful to receive it so close to Christmas."

Our adviser helped this 52-year-old woman who had been living with her daughter and granddaughter in a property with serious damp and mould problems.

In April 2022 – when energy bills sat at an average of £2,000 a year – the Welsh government estimated up to 45% of households in Wales were living in fuel poverty. That included virtually all our lower-income households; over four in 10 of whom found themselves in severe fuel poverty, needing to spend huge portions of their income just to keep warm.

By October, average energy bills had risen by a further 25%, to approximately £2,500 a year,

compounding people's difficulties further still. And under the Ofgem price cap, those in north Wales and Mersey continue to face the highest prices in Great Britain.

In times of continued crisis, collaboration is not a choice. It is the only way to respond. Together, with members and partners in Wales, we have called for direct, targeted financial support and deeper protection for those most in need, successfully seeing the Welsh government:



PHOTOGRAPHY: TYNESIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

NEA CYMRU HAS ALSO:

- Continued to lead the Fuel Poverty Coalition Cymru and provide the secretariat for the Senedd's Cross Party Group on Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency.
- Provided regular platforms for hundreds of partners in Wales – including community-facing professionals – to keep abreast of developments, engage with key stakeholders, and share insights via our Wales Fuel Poverty Forums.
- Presented and participated in key external partnerships, national and regional events, and advisory panels, amplifying and influencing key issues and priorities.
- Engaged and deepened relationships with Welsh media, including BBC Wales, ITV Wales, BBC Radio Wales, and several print titles.
- Grew National Energy Action's Standard Membership in Wales by a further 28%.
- Worked with partners to help provide direct advice and support to households in need, via our Warm and Safe Homes (WASH) Advice Service.
- Trained over 500 in Wales via a variety of qualifications and short courses, covering key issues associated with tackling fuel poverty and fuel debt, and providing practical energy advice.

NORTHERN IRELAND



Pat Austin, head of Northern Ireland, says: 'Last year we witnessed another year of relentless price increases in Northern Ireland across energy, food, and housing.'



Alongside this, our Northern Ireland Executive continues to be fractured and many of the interventions received throughout GB were unable to be disseminated to our people, despite extensive engagement with our politicians, senior civil servants, and the media.

The lack of movement on fuel poverty statistics compelled us to commission some polling work from LucidTalk in June 2022. The findings were harrowing with results indicating that at least 45% of households were now considered to be living in fuel poverty, 80% of households had already cut down on their central heating, and more than 1 in 10 households had to forego meals to meet the rising energy costs. Significant increases were to follow.

These findings were also borne out by our Warm and Well Project, which directly dealt with the impact of this cost-of-living crisis and attempted to mitigate this through topping up struggling homes with gas, electricity, and oil. These households were also desperately needing assistance due to the high prevalence of prepayment meters and 68% of households being reliant on domestic home heating oil.

Despite the difficult situation we continued to campaign and advocate, and in November 2022 with the Energy Price Guarantee (EPG) and in January 2022 a £600 per household Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS). The need for deeper and broader support continues.

Our hope for the coming year is the re-establishment of the Northern Ireland Executive with clear pathways for continued timely support for those most in need.

NORTHERN IRELAND OPERATIONS:

- 29 Free Energy Efficiency/Fuel Poverty & Health Sessions delivered to 562 attendees.
- Information videos on Energy Efficiency, Fuel Poverty and Condensation were recorded for Ulster University Students and for the members of the Northern Ireland Safety Group – 200 people watched this.
- Meeting held at the Long Gallery, Stormont, with MLAs, Department for Communities (DfC) and Department for the Economy (DfE) officials, and all CEOs from energy suppliers.
- Local government election manifesto 2023 published for dissemination to all members of the Fuel Poverty Coalition, local politicians, and all other invested partners.
- Worked with the Consumer Council and Advice NI to disseminate information and top tips on energy savings.
- Regularly updated Twitter and Facebook with energy efficiency top tips, fuel poverty issues and cost-of-living support information.
- Energy efficiency top tips information submitted for publication to local community newsletters in Belfast and South Eastern Area.
- Commissioned LucidTalk Polling on cost-of-living issues. www.nea.org.uk/publications/lucidtalk-nea-ni-ni-wide-omnibus-poll-project/
- Assisted Age NI and Power NI with their winter programme – this involved delivering two Energy Efficiency events in Q4, which were sent to all their members: <https://youtu.be/bDRSIIxfEE>.
- Worked with Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP).



PHOTOGRAPHY: TYNESIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

NORTHERN IRELAND TRAINING

Unsurprisingly due to the cost-of-living crisis, there was a huge increase in requests for energy efficiency sessions from community groups for householders and frontline workers and staff in a variety of different organisations from charities to local government and transport companies.

We saw an increase in demand for webinars, particularly from utility companies requesting Changing Energy Related Behaviour training for staff.

We also promoted National Energy Action and energy efficiency top tips via Phoenix Natural Gas and Electric Ireland.

CYPSP bring together a range of agencies, including voluntary and community sector organisations, that aim to improve the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland. They have developed a Translation Hub, with over 100 languages available, and have added our energy efficiency and advice and support to it. <https://cypsp.hscni.net/translation-hub/>.

- Connected with Sensory Support teams in Southern Eastern Trust and with an interpreter to provide Energy Efficiency information sessions to deaf and hearing-impaired groups.

HOW WE HELPED:

April 2022 – October 2023

	Number of Events	Attendance
City & Guilds Energy Awareness Supported E-Learn	4	21
Energy Efficiency Events:		
Direct to Householders via Community Groups/Charities Frontline Workers/Staff	83	1513
	7	514
Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency		
Local Council Webinars	2	32
Changing Energy Related Behaviour	14	138
Total	110	2218

WARM AND WELL (WAW) PROJECT INTERVENTIONS



We implemented a referral pathway for Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to access the Warm and Well Project.



113 households were referred for 317 insulation measures to help keep the heat in.



We received 234 requests through the Warm and Well Project, which offers advice and practical support.



£6,277 in crisis support was given to vulnerable householders across Northern Ireland.

INNOVATION AND TECHNICAL EVALUATION

The energy crisis underlined the need for a fair transition to net zero. Decarbonising our heating systems and balancing our energy systems provide some good opportunity to achieve warmer, safer homes but only if delivered in a coordinated way in conjunction with householders, taking account of their diverse needs and circumstances. There is no broad brush one size fits all, and appropriate support must accompany new innovations.



PHOTOGRAPHY: TYNESIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

“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 National Energy Action support fund.

Our ambition is to help solve fuel poverty through understanding and applying innovations in vulnerable and low-income households. The Innovation and

Technical Evaluation team works closely with partners who are committed to improving their communities through research and trials of innovative retrofitable technologies.

- During the year the team has concluded five projects and written comprehensive reports on these. Where appropriate, the reports are published on National Energy Action’s website, and promoted through media and conferences. The team is currently working on 10 live projects.

“I really can’t thank you enough for helping me Sharon, my life seems less bleak. Thank you Blimey, I just shed a tear of relief and gratitude!”

Our advice team helped a 56-year-old man with debilitating health conditions with a fuel voucher, access to professional debt support, as well as access to a foodbank.

- The team concluded the development of the content for the Decarbonising Homes: Technologies, Impacts and Solutions level course, which is owned by the training team. (See page 20).

SIGNIFICANT LIVE PROJECTS INCLUDE:

- 1 A new project to evaluate the effectiveness of some electric heating technologies alongside newly installed solar PV, which include heat pumps, infrared and more traditional storage heating.
- 2 Fairwater – We are a partner in Ofwat’s £36m Water Breakthrough Challenge delivering a project to reduce household water (particularly hot water) consumption through improved water efficiency at a task-based level.
- 3 Evaluation of two separate Smart Solar (retrofitted battery storage) projects for partner organisations in Barnsley and Cannock Chase.
- 4 A project with Northern PowerGrid to install and evaluate the impact of fitting battery storage as a backup power supply in homes where residents rely heavily on electricity for medical equipment.



PEOPLE WE’VE HELPED

PENSIONER HELPED BY BELFAST CITY COUNCIL’S (BCC) AFFORDABLE WARMTH SCHEME (AWS)

A 75-year-old pensioner lived alone and is housebound with a multitude of ongoing health conditions. Their gas boiler has flooded their bathroom, leaving them with no heat or hot water. As the boiler was less than 15 years old they were told to go through Belfast City Council’s Fixed Cost Repair Scheme. But, as they were on a low income and had no savings they couldn’t afford the £300 upfront fee. After being referred by AWS, National Energy Action’s Belfast Warm and Well Project covered this fee. We provided them with oil-filled radiators to provide heat in the interim and a keep warm pack. We also referred them to Bryson Energy’s Cost-of-Living Emergency Relief Initiative, getting £200 credited to their electric account, as they pay by direct debit.

TRAINING

From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, National Energy Action has trained almost 5,000 learners. On average, course attendees indicate that they expect to pass on advice to 13 householders per week helping over 3 million households.



SUBJECT

- Energy Awareness 6282-01
- Short introduction level courses
- Fuel Debt Advice in the Community
- Homes: Technologies, Impacts and Solutions (Level 4)
- Introduction to Domestic Renewable Technologies in Decarbonising Energy
- Use in the Home (new course)

TOTAL number of learners

4962

*One learner said:
“Just a massive thanks - this training, and no doubt the manual, gives me a massive head start with a new project and will really help me help a lot of vulnerable people.”*

EVALUATION FEEDBACK

- The proportion of course attendees who indicated a good or excellent knowledge of the subject prior to attending a course was 21%. However, after the course this was 95%.
- 99% of course attendees said they were satisfied with the training they received and would likely recommend us in the future.

One attendee said: ‘This is one of the best training courses I have ever participated in (and I am speaking from the perspective of being a qualified teacher and trainer, with over a decade’s experience of creating and delivering training courses, which is liable to make me

hyper-critical!). Ticked all the boxes - clear aims, excellent pre-course comms and expectations clearly communicated in the sessions, kept to time, content appropriate to the target audience, language clear and all jargon explained, tutors created a purposeful, friendly learning environment, encouraged participation without compromising on the amount and quality of their input.

Can’t praise it highly enough and can’t wait to do more training with you.’



PHOTOGRAPHY:

FUNDRAISING AND PARTNERSHIPS

We have been overwhelmed by your generosity, amid the crisis.

As the cost-of-living crisis takes its toll on household incomes across the country, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of our donors, supporters and fundraisers who have gone above and beyond to support our work to help people living in fuel poverty. As well as donating directly to us, our supporters have organised a range of events or taken part in mass participation events to fundraise for National Energy Action. We also like to thank the new corporate supporters and donors we welcomed this year.

Our membership increased by 49% this year. We would like to thank all members, those in the Business Supporters Group and other supporters have also continued to provide their valuable support throughout the year. A huge thank you from the team for your continued support.



PEOPLE WE'VE HELPED

£147 ENERGY VOUCHER HELP

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 her onto a social tariff for her water bills and topped up her gas prepayment meter with a £147 voucher.

NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION

National Energy Action, the fuel poverty charity, campaigns so everyone can afford to live in a warm, safe and healthy home. This is something denied to millions because of poor housing, low incomes, and high bills.

Working across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, everything we do aims to improve the lives of people in fuel poverty. We directly support people with energy and income maximisation advice and we advocate on issues including improving the energy efficiency of our homes.

We do not work alone. Partnerships and collaboration have been at our heart for over 40 years, helping us drive better health and wellbeing outcomes for people struggling to heat their homes.

WHERE TO FIND US

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Web: www.nea.org.uk

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