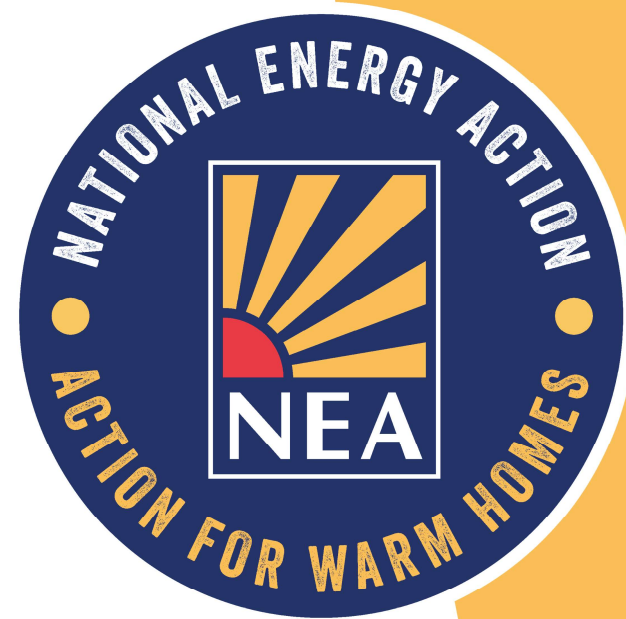




EASTERN FUEL POVERTY FORUM

17 April 2024



ABOUT NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION

National Energy Action (NEA) is the national fuel poverty and energy efficiency charity that has worked across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland for over 40 years, to ensure that everyone in the UK can afford to live in a warm, safe and healthy home.

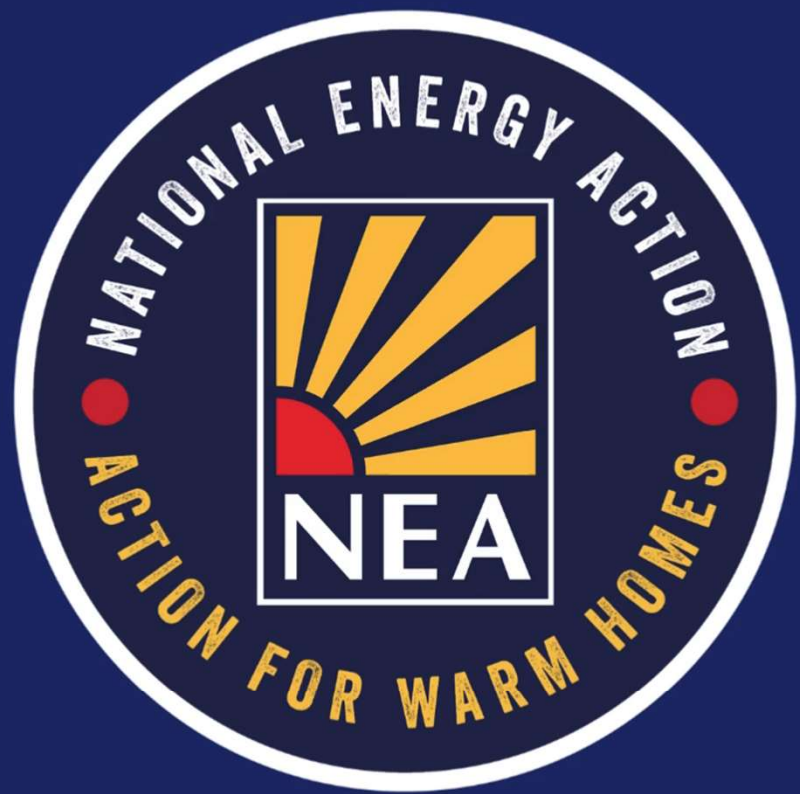
We work with frontline practitioners, companies, regulators and the government, to make positive changes for customers in vulnerable circumstances.



| Time | Agenda |
|-------------|--|
| 10:30am | Welcome Molly Chambers, Project Development Manager, NEA |
| 10:50am | Policy update Dion Tickner, Policy Analyst, NEA |
| 11:15am | Update from Ofgem Speaker joining remotely |
| 11:45am | Refreshments and networking |
| 12:05pm | CommuniHeat overview Ollie Pendered, Chief Executive and Founder, Community Energy South |
| 12:20pm | Vulnerability Visualisation James Perry, Director, Egnida Innovation |
| 12:40pm | Group Discussions Facilitated by National Energy Action |
| 1:00pm | Forum round up |
| 1:15pm | Networking lunch |

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





Pre-forum insights: Understanding the priorities of our stakeholders

Responses described:

- Households struggling with the affordability of energy – with increases in the number of households falling into fuel poverty and debt
- Peoples' physical and mental health conditions are being exacerbated as a result of living in fuel poverty
- The impact of damp and mould on residents' health
- People being afraid to put the heating on
- People not being able to heat their homes during winter as they can't afford to turn the heating on
- People are rationing their energy use and going without in order to pay their bills
- Fuel poverty is reinforcing existing inequality, especially in marginalised groups
- "Inability to afford off-grid heating such as oil due to increase in cost of living"

Priorities for supporting households experiencing fuel poverty (in order of most frequently mentioned):

- Supporting households to access financial support, whether this is through income maximisation, energy bill reductions, or voucher schemes
- Providing energy advice to people living in fuel poverty
- Signposting or referring households on for further support, such as energy efficiency measures, home improvements, or grants
- Empowering support for people liaising with their energy supplier or taking cases to the Energy Ombudsman





WARM HOMES

HEALTHY FUTURES



Nationally coordinated, locally delivered programme

Fully-funded and flexible to local need

Delivering energy advice and support to tens of thousands of people

Bringing together the health sector and trusted local partners

Keeping people **warm, safe, and healthy** at home

Contact danielle.butler@nea.org.uk or scan to find out how you can be involved:



UNDERSTANDING SMART METERS

National Energy Action (NEA) has just launched a new smart meter community engagement programme across England and Wales.

We want to ensure vulnerable consumers are not left behind and that they can access the benefits afforded by the rollout.

NEA's regional team are keen to support your organisation through this project.

We're seeking to organise or join you at householder events between now and the end of September. NEA can provide:

- Practical energy and smart meter advice
- Tailored information
- Helpful resources for householders

Please get in touch with me today if you'd like to discuss this further. Or you can email smartgrants@nea.org.uk



The Challenge for future energy systems transitions:

- Ensuring access to safe and efficient utility supplies
- Consistently and comprehensively enabling community resilience
- Safeguarding customers in vulnerable situations (CVS)

What we did:

- Map current understandings of vulnerability
- Forecast energy justice implications of the low carbon transition
- Identify learnings from recent crisis events
- Identify current network best practice in supporting CVS ('vulnerability first' approach)
- Develop best practice guidelines

Customers in vulnerable situations and community resilience: A cross-utility study



Best Practice Guidelines:

- 1) **Understanding vulnerability:** When identifying and assessing whether a customer may be in vulnerable circumstances, utility-related companies should take into account individual and personal factors, structural factors, and intersectionality
- 2) **Taking a ‘vulnerability-first’ approach** when identifying and understanding vulnerability, in strategic and practical planning, and in working in partnership and collaboration with various stakeholders
- 3) **Debt and affordability**



Best Practice Guidelines:

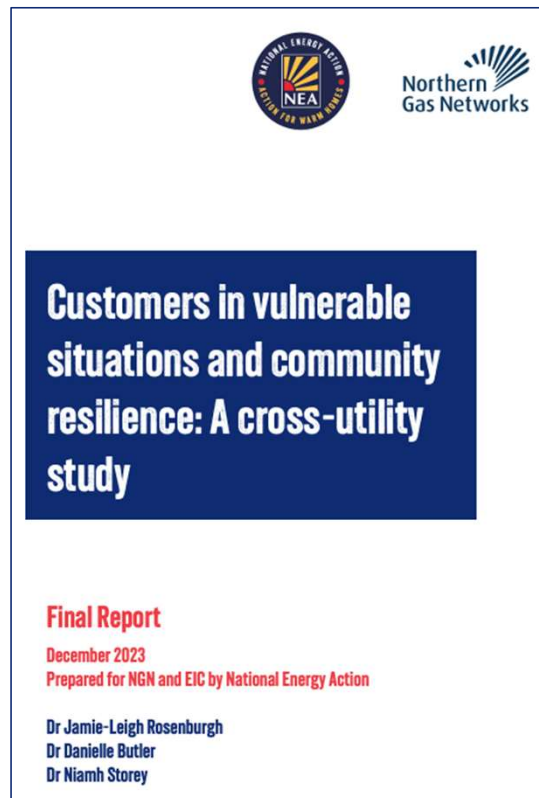
4) Communications and accessibility: Meeting diverse needs, being accessible to all, and customer service

5) Support for all: through the Priority Services Register (PSR) and beyond the PSR

6) Personal safety: during service outages and in ensuring a safe and just transition to net zero



The full report and executive summary, can be found on NEA's website
www.nea.org.uk



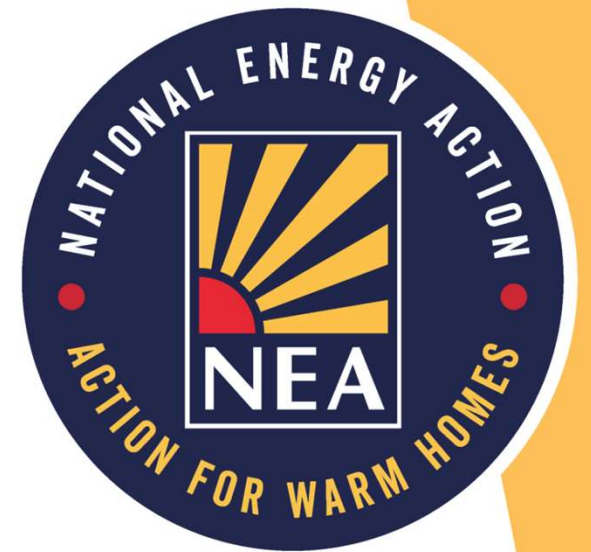
Further questions:

Jamie.Rosenburgh@nea.org.uk

(Insights and Impact Manager, NEA)



TRAINING WITH NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION



INTERACTIVE WEBINARS/FACE-TO-FACE

- Living with the Energy Crisis
- Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency
- Understanding Fuel Poverty and Health: Impacts on Mental Health
- Level 2 Award in Fuel Debt Advice in the Community
- Level 2 award in Introduction to Domestic Renewable Low Carbon Technologies
- Changing Energy Related Behaviour
- Paying for Fuel
- Vulnerability in the Energy Market
- Tackling the Cold
- Getting the Most Out of the In-Home Display



SUPPORTED E-LEARNING

- Delivering High Quality Domestic Energy Advice: A Practical Guide
- Level 4 Award in Decarbonising Homes: Technologies, Impacts and Solutions
- Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness (FTF available)
- Fuel Poverty and Health
- Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency
- Overview of the Smart Meter Rollout
- A range of bitesize courses designed for the on the go learning

Fully funded places may be available.
Bespoke courses also welcome, please contact the training team.
Visit www.nea.org.uk/training



MEMBERSHIP

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

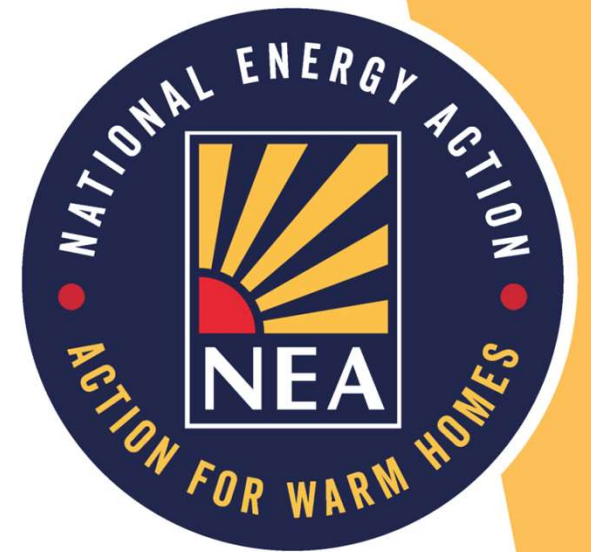
- The **Business Supporters Group** has been in existence for over 20 years. A strong relationship with the business community is vital to ensure the fuel poor can benefit from current schemes and technological developments. NEA's campaigning activities would not be so effective without industry support.
- 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!**

National Energy Action 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.



Policy update

Dion Tickner, Policy Analyst, NEA



National Energy Action'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 down to £1,690 for the typical household using electricity and gas and paying by direct debit. However, this is still 50% higher than pre-crisis prices.
- There are still 6 million households in fuel poverty, compared to 4.5 million in October 2021.
- While the Household Support Fund will continue for a further six months, there will be nothing in place to plug this gap come September.
- The Budget did not include any further provision for households to alleviate fuel poverty.
- The Government has removed the £90 fee for Debt Relief Orders and will increase the maximum repayment period on Universal Credit loans to 24 months.

Coming up

- Continuing to push for a social tariff to provide sustained price support for fuel poor households.
- Ensuring that fuel poverty is an unignorable topic in upcoming elections/manifestos.



Homes - Achieving a fair and affordable transition to net zero

Recent developments

- In September, the government rolled back on its key climate commitments, which included abandoning increased minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector.
- Labour also U-turned on its £28bn per year green investment pledge.
- In January, we released our Fuel Poverty Monitor 2023, showing that households across the UK stand to save a combined total of £7bn (equivalent to nearly £500 per household per year) on energy bills if fuel poverty targets are met.
- ECO4 delivery has recently picked up, after a relatively slow start – largely delivering a smaller number of upgrades than predicted, but much larger energy savings.

Coming up

- Pushing for extension of ECO4 past 2026.
- Manifesto influencing, including using evidence from our membership to create a detailed delivery plan for energy efficiency in the next parliament.
- Pushing for commitments for rented accommodation from each party ahead of the election.



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

Recent developments

- Ofgem has now made the decision to make prepayment the cheapest payment type in the price cap – a campaign success for National Energy Action and our partners.
- Forced installations of prepayment meters have restarted for a number of energy suppliers. National Energy Action is monitoring how this is being approached.
- Standing charges are continuing to rise and are having a disproportionate impact on low-income households.

Coming up

- Ofgem has launched a call for input on debt and affordability. We have published our initial thoughts on our website.
- Ofgem and DESNZ are considering the future of the price cap. National Energy Action is focused on maintaining two aspects of the cap in particular – transparency and trust.




What else is happening?

- **The DESNZ Select Committee** is undertaking several enquiries that are relevant. This includes the ‘heating our homes’ enquiry, which National Energy Action gave oral evidence to last year.
- **Party conferences** – National Energy Action will be at the Conservative, Labour, and Lib Dem party conferences, advocating for the needs of fuel poor households.



Our pre-election one pager

- We will be using this document to engage with politicians ahead of the election.
- Look out for a National Energy Action manifesto, building on this, to be released closer to the election.



WARM, SAFE AND HEALTHY

National Energy Action (NEA), 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.

Two years into the energy crisis, energy bills remain hundreds of pounds a year higher than at the start of the crisis and are likely to stay high until the end of the decade. In this context, millions of households are:

COLD

Households cannot afford to heat their homes to a reasonable standard of warmth, and are living in cold, damp homes. Beyond the money needed to afford heating, people are not able to cook a hot meal or use hot water for washing.

UNSAFE

Households are routinely turning to unsafe practices to stay warm at home, using portable gas stoves or barbecues for cooking, candles as the main source of lighting and even burning furniture for warmth or regularly using unserviced heating appliances at home.

UNHEALTHY

Households underheating their homes can be dangerous to their physical and mental health, or even fatal. People can't afford to refrigerate their food or medicines. Others who are prioritising their heating and other energy use are falling further into energy debt, which is now at record levels. Half (46%) of people in problem debt also have a mental health problem.

This situation will worsen unless three key steps are taken to keep the most vulnerable people warm, safe and healthy at home.

VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS URGENTLY NEED MORE SUPPORT TO PAY UNAFFORDABLE ENERGY BILLS.

Along with well over a hundred other organisations, National Energy Action is calling on all political parties to commit to the introduction of an energy social tariff, providing lower bills or deeper discounts for the most vulnerable households.

RECORD LEVELS OF ENERGY DEBT ARE CRUSHING HOUSEHOLDS, PUTTING UP PRICES AND REDUCING ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.


Alongside debt charities, National Energy Action is calling for the new Government to introduce a new 'help to repay' scheme to accelerate the re-payment of energy debt to put extra money back into people's pockets and support local economies.

IMPROVING ENERGY EFFICIENCY CUTS BILLS, CARBON AND IMPROVES LIVES.

Early progress next parliament to improve the energy efficiency of fuel-poor homes is essential if statutory fuel poverty and carbon targets are to be met. Early investment to reduce the deepest levels of fuel poverty in homes and communities, alongside new regulatory drivers will generate the greatest societal, economic, and environmental benefits.

PLEASE COMMIT TO THESE VITAL AREAS AND KEEP THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE WARM, SAFE AND HEALTHY AT HOME.

www.nea.org.uk



Indicative policy timeline

Summer 24

- Working with Ofgem to improve the situation with debt/affordability/standing charges
- Making the case to political parties to increase action on energy efficiency in the next parliament

Summer 25

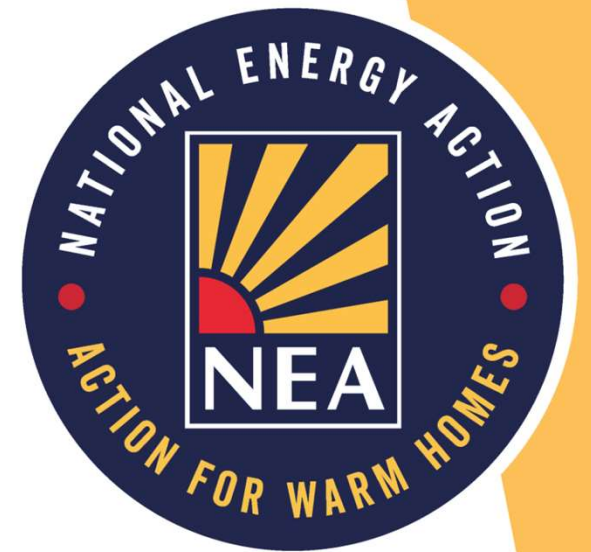
- Preparing for the next phase in the smart meter rollout
- Working on shaping the next phases of WHD and ECO, both schemes currently sunset in March 2026

Winter 24-25

- Party conferences
- Post election work with the eventual GE winners (election could be as late as January 2025). Includes first budget, which we will push to include spending for energy efficiency
- Pushing for a new fuel poverty strategy at the beginning of the next parliament



Update from Ofgem



Protections for vulnerable consumers

NEA Fuel Poverty Forum | April
2024



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Agenda

- Debt and affordability call for input
- Price protections
- Priority Services Register update
- Involuntary pre-payment meter update
- Warm Home Discount/ECO
- Consumer Vulnerability Strategy

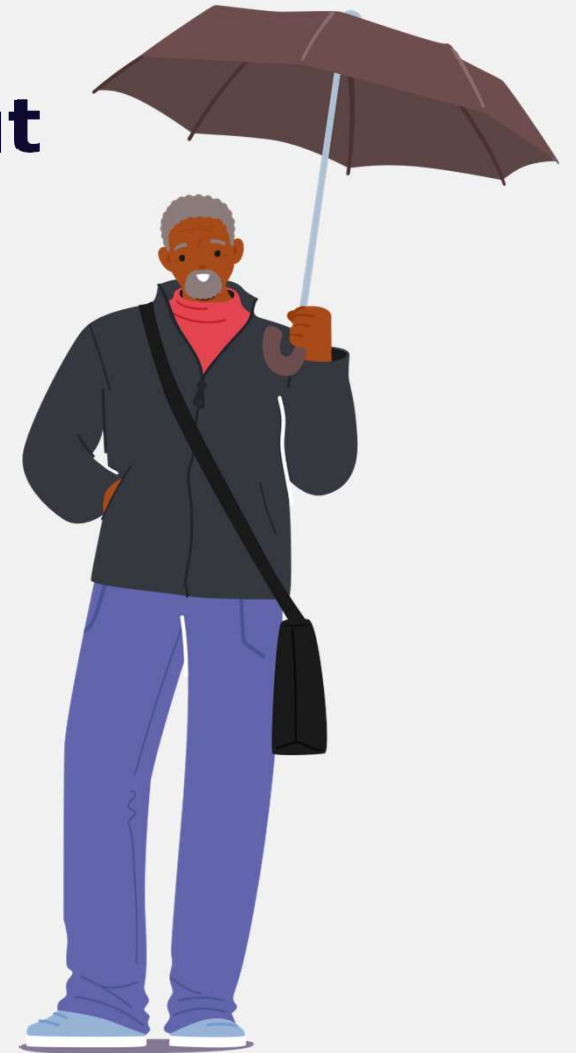


Debt and affordability call for input

The call for input is based on three challenges:

1. Whether current affordability challenges will continue to impact debt levels and therefore, **whether the challenge is temporary or more enduring and systemic.**
2. If there is a way to get more money into the energy system and allocate costs between groups of consumers that will **minimise future debt and support those most in need.**
3. How we can **ensure debt is managed efficiently, and appropriately**, by all market participants including government and Ofgem.

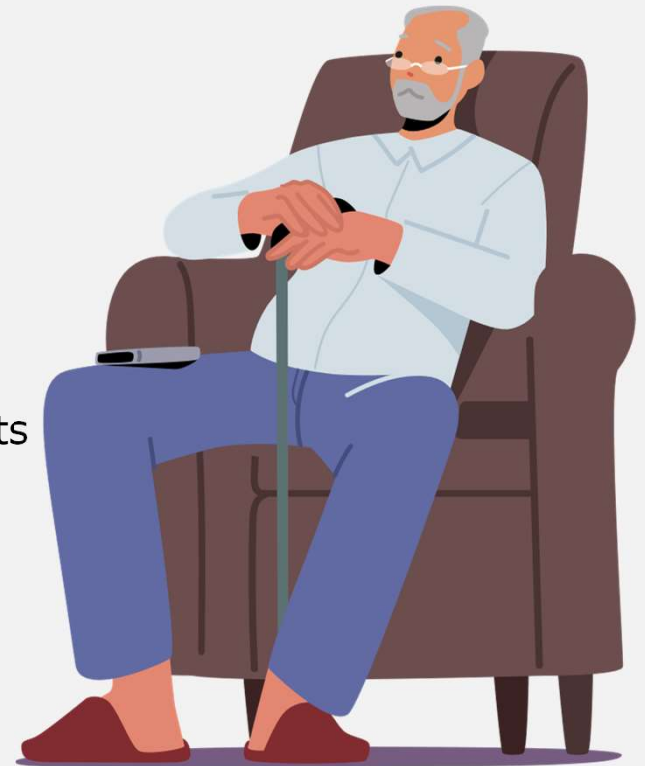
*Call for input closes on 13th May



Price protections

- The introduction of half hourly settlement from 2025 means customers will have **more flexibility in how they use and pay for electricity**, and is expected to lead to a growth in smarter time of use tariffs that reward customers for being more flexible in their energy usage.
- We have an increasingly renewables-dominated electricity sector, with increasing numbers of consumers using electric vehicles, heat pumps, and solar panels. **This should reduce costs for all.**
- We are now considering the **future of the price cap** and how it needs to adjust to ensure customers are protected, they continue to pay a fair price for their energy, and they get to realise all the benefits of net zero

*Call for evidence closes on 6th May



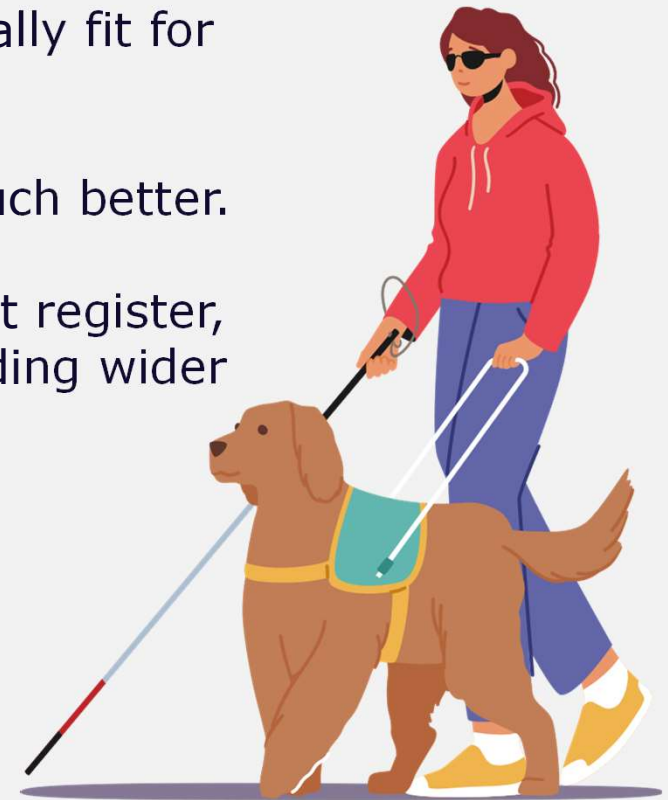
Priority Services Register

"Is the system we have in place to manage, track and store information on vulnerable customers really fit for the 21st Century?"

My view is that we should aim to try to do much better.

We should all consider building towards a joint register, not just between water and energy, but including wider sectors and potentially local and national government"

Jonathan Brearley, CEO Ofgem



Involuntary PPM

- In 2023, Ofgem developed a code of practice and subsequent **licence changes** to protect those at risk of involuntary PPM.
- In January, we announced the first of the suppliers to have met our strict restart criteria
- We have been **monitoring** the suppliers closely as they have restarted, with some still to action any installations at all.



Warm Home Discount and ECO

In 2022-23, almost £443.8 million in WHD was delivered to customers (£395.2 million in England & Wales and £48.5 million in Scotland). Rebates of £150 were provided to over 2.66 million customers in or at risk of fuel poverty. The scheme has been extended to March 2026.



As of 7 March 2024 over 355,000 measures had been submitted under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO4), consisting of over 40,000 boiler upgrades (just under 11,000 of which are to a renewable heating system), nearly 45,000 loft insulation and 25,000 solid wall insulation measures.

Consumer Vulnerability Strategy

- In 2019 we published our Consumer Vulnerability strategy 2025 with themes and outcomes we hoped to achieve. The five themes are:
 1. Improving identification of vulnerability and smart use of data
 2. Supporting those struggling with their bills
 3. Driving significant improvements in customer service for vulnerable groups
 4. Encouraging positive and inclusive innovation
 5. Working with partners to tackle issues that cut across multiple sectors
- We are working towards publishing a new strategy at the beginning of 2025.



Energy Aware: advising and empowering consumers around their energy rights, use and available support

1. Advise and empower consumers to make the best possible choices in making their energy use more affordable, more accessible, and more efficient.
2. Through our campaign content strands, engage with trusted third parties, and build our capacity to communicate with consumers through them as well as via Ofgem owned channels.

Debt

Energy Saving Advice

Supplier Relations

Consumer Understanding

Financial Support

Non-Domestic

Supply Disruption

Helping you be #EnergyAware

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Our ask...

1. Follow our socials (and ask others to do the same)



2. Use our toolkits and information

- We will send these out following the call
- Created based on consumer research and insights
- Over 200 assets in total
- You can lift directly on to your social platforms, or use the info to create your own versions
- Includes posters that can be printed and displayed at important community locations

We would love to know what you use and how you use them – please feed back to us with photos if you can.

3. Let us know what else you need

Is there more that we can do to give you the tools you need to communicate with and help vulnerable people you interact with?

If so, get in touch and we will look at what we can do.

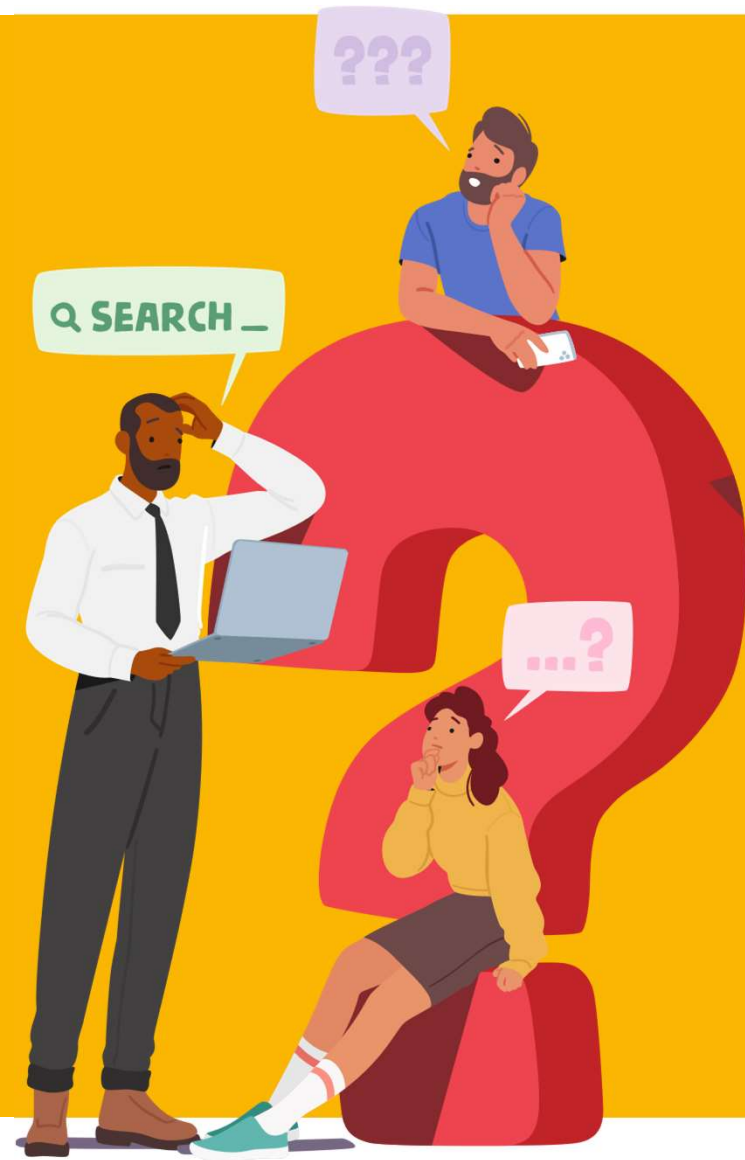


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Questions?

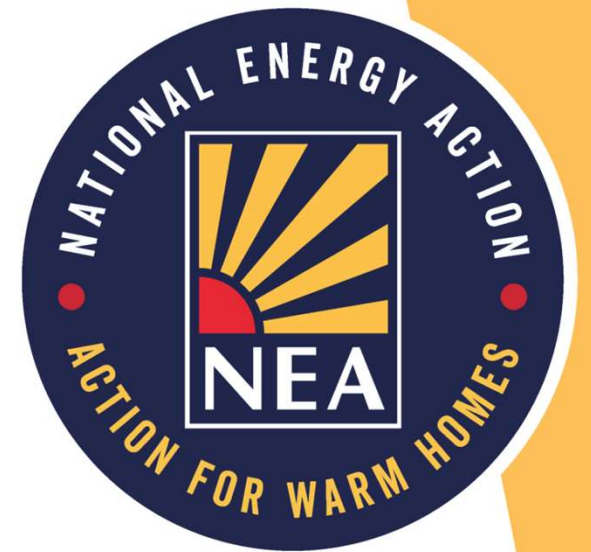


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REFRESHMENTS AND NETWORKING

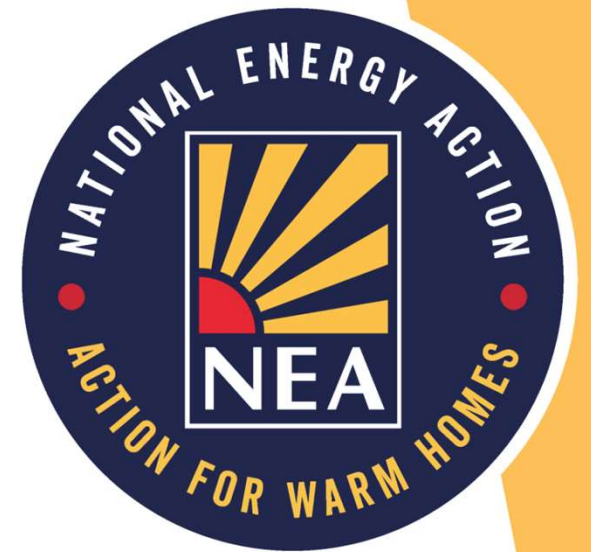


CommuniHeat overview

Ollie Pendered, Chief Executive and Founder,
Community Energy South

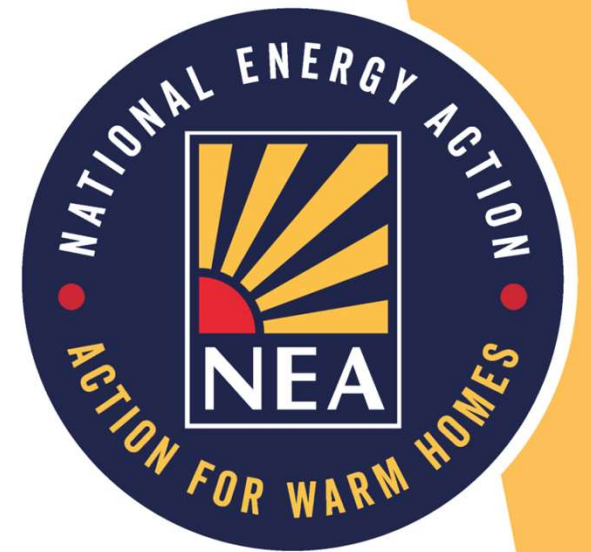


Vulnerability Visualisation



James Perry, Director, Egnida Innovation

GROUP DISCUSSIONS



In small groups please discuss:

- 1. Affordability and debt** – what steps need to be taken to tackle energy affordability and reduce the impact of high levels of debt in the energy sector?
- 2. Energy consumers and the private rented sector** – how can we ensure that private landlords upgrade their homes to a reasonable level of energy efficiency (EPC C)?



THANK YOU!

Thank you for attending and for your contributions.

We'd be grateful if you can complete an evaluation form and hand this back to a member of National Energy Action staff or scan this QR code to complete online.



Please stay for lunch and further networking.



National Energy Action is an independent charity. Registration No. 290511



The following slides are optional/to be removed.

CASE STUDY

Gerrard is disabled, unemployed and lives with his partner, who earns less than £20,000 a year. He lost his job during the pandemic and they are both already struggling with paying their bills.

“We can live, but it’s just existing. The bills seem insurmountable.

“I just got a demand today for another £850 and I haven’t a clue where they think I’m going to get that money from.

“Looking into winter is even worse and I just don’t know where people are going to find this.

“You either heat or you eat, and I can see me not heating the house until my wife or grandchild comes home.”



CASE STUDY

Jeanette is a 52-year-old part-time admin assistant who lives with her husband, son and daughter aged 20 and 21 in Sheffield. She makes sure the heating is no higher than 15C to make the family's money last. They have a gas and electric prepayment meter.

'We do have arguments about it being too cold, but it's the only way. Otherwise, I just work just to pay the bills.'

'I'm taking on a second job to cover the additional costs, as I want to spare my children from shouldering the rise in prices. They're already paying board.'

'I'm anxious because if the bills are already just about manageable, what on earth will happen when they grow even higher in the coming months?'

