

JULY 2026

NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION NI



NEWSLETTER

Welcome to our annual newsletter, where we update you on the key fuel poverty issues of the moment. We want to thank you for your continued support and collaboration, especially as we move into the second half of the year with evidence pointing to a difficult period ahead for many households.

This year's newsletter comes at a critical point for households across Northern Ireland. While there has been welcome movement on fuel poverty policy, including the launch of the Fuel Poverty Strategy, many households continue to face intense pressure from food, fuel and wider living costs. Our focus remains on turning policy commitments into timely, practical support for those most in need.

There is no doubt that in 2026 households have continued to feel the burden of the cost of living, particularly across food and fuel. That said, some encouraging progress was made with the launch of the long-awaited Fuel Poverty Strategy in February 2026. We welcome the strategy, particularly its emphasis on partnership working and the changes to discretionary funds to include support for fuel. However, we remain disappointed by the lack of fuel poverty targets, which we believe would strengthen delivery. The commitment from Minister Lyons to set a budget of £150M over five years to deliver the strategy is also welcome, but clarity is still needed on when the funding will materialise. Alongside this, we have been responding to the new Warm Healthy Homes Fund, which will be the Department for Communities' flagship programme to deliver much-needed warm homes and support fuel-poor households on an affordable road to Net Zero. Set to be delivered in 2027, the fund is currently out for consultation, and we encourage you all to respond. We also await the Department's first Fuel Poverty Action Plan, due by the end of the year, which should set out the trajectory for the strategy's implementation.

These were positive developments, but only a few weeks after the strategy launch, the outbreak of war in the Middle East triggered a sharp rise in oil prices. This became an almost overnight issue for the 63% of households in Northern Ireland that rely on domestic home heating oil, a non-regulated fuel. At its height, the cost of 300 litres of oil rose to more than £300 within weeks, while 900 litres reached more than £1,000.

We responded quickly by using every available lever: highlighting the issue across the political spectrum, representing Northern Ireland consumers at the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, and raising key concerns with the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA).

By March 2026, the UK Government announced a financial support intervention for Heating Oil which was matched by the NI Executive to bring forth a targeted support package for 300,000 households reliant on home heating oil equating to £100 per household. Due to be delivered by September, it will be a self-referral scheme which will require the support from our organisations to ensure it gets to those most in need.

Secondly, the Department for the Economy (DfE) is also in the process of administering a three year annual Electricity Support Discount Scheme of around £32.50 for all households. This will be an automatic delivery scheme also set to be delivered in September.

Thirdly, the UK Government recently announced that the VAT on households' electricity bills will fall from 5% to 0% for six months, saving a typical GB household bill £45 and will run from October 2026 to 31 March 2027. Stormont needs to ensure that this support is also provided to NI households and let us know how this is to be introduced here. It is clear that all of these interventions need to be delivered at pace.

Last month we also heard from the CMA who delivered its report on the heating oil market in Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK. A key recommendation stated that **Stormont should apply stricter consumer protection regulations to home heating oil suppliers**. It found that the huge spike in prices at the start of the Middle East conflict largely reflected rising wholesale costs and that the market is generally competitive. However, concluding that oil consumers are not as well protected as those connected to the gas and electricity grids. While not recommending price controls, it has suggested a "new, proportionate regulatory regime" which largely involves giving consumers clearer information. Other key recommendations are to require suppliers to:

- register and meet minimum standards, including how prices are quoted and order cancellations are managed.
- clearly signpost available payment plans and minimum purchase volume.
- create a register for vulnerable households to make it easier to protect them

And while some abatement in oil prices was felt in June and July, we are once again witnessing the geopolitical turbulence impacting on the oil markets which are flowing into our domestic oil prices with immediate effect. This would surely impress upon Stormont to implement these recommendations as soon as possibly feasible.

In conclusion, we need to work collaboratively now more than ever to use existing pathways and establish new pathways to support those most in need. If you haven't already, please [join](#) our Fuel Poverty Coalition so that you can work collaboratively at pace to support those most in need.

POLICY PROGRESS AND PRACTICAL ACTION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Fuel poverty continues to be a significant challenge across Northern Ireland. Polling commissioned by NEA NI in September 2025 found that 39% of households are living in fuel poverty, highlighting the ongoing pressures facing households and the need for more coordinated action.

A defining feature of recent months has been the volatility of home heating oil prices. NI remains uniquely exposed to fluctuations in global energy markets, with 61% of households dependent on heating oil, rising to over 80% in rural areas. In April 2026, the average cost of 500 litres of heating oil rose to a staggeringly £627 ([CCNI](#)). Although prices have since dropped a bit, they remain significantly above previous levels. Moreover, the impacts are now being seen across the wider energy market, as gas and electricity suppliers begin to announce tariff increases.

In response, NEA NI has been engaging with the NI Executive and Westminster to highlight the impact of rising energy costs and advocate for support for vulnerable households, including providing evidence to the NI Affairs Select Committee. The Executive has announced a £36.4 million Home Heating Oil Support Scheme. Expected to launch later this year, it will provide eligible low-income households with a £100 prepaid card towards the cost of heating oil.

While welcome, NEA NI also continues to call for longer-term solutions, including greater investment in domestic energy efficiency, regulatory oversight of the home heating oil market, and expanded support for households experiencing fuel poverty.

Through its role as Secretariat to the All-Party Group on Fuel Poverty in the NI Assembly, NEA NI has continued to raise these issues with policymakers. Recent meetings have brought together representatives from the Utility Regulator and energy suppliers to discuss energy costs and consumer support ahead of what is expected to be a challenging winter.

Alongside the immediate response to rising energy costs, 2026 has marked a significant milestone in fuel poverty policy. In February, the Executive published its [Warm Healthy Homes Strategy 2026-2036](#), the first new fuel poverty strategy in over a decade. The strategy sets out a long-term framework to improve energy efficiency, housing standards, consumer protections and actions to reduce the health impacts of cold homes.

NEA NI has played an active role in shaping the strategy through membership of the Department for Communities' (DfC) Fuel Poverty and Just Transition Reference Panel. While welcoming its publication as an important step forward, NEA NI continues to highlight the need for sustained political commitment and investment to deliver meaningful reductions in fuel poverty over the coming decade.

Attention is now turning to implementation. In May, the DfC launched a consultation on the proposed [Warm Health Homes Fund](#), a new energy efficiency scheme intended to replace the current Affordable Warmth Scheme. The Fund represents a major opportunity to increase investment in warmer, healthier and more energy-efficient homes for low-income households and aims to deliver £150 million of investment over its first five years.

Beyond policy development, NEA NI continues to expand its practical work across NI. A notable recent development is a new Community Energy Saver project in partnership with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and supported by Ulster Garden Villages. The project reflects a growing focus on expanding NEA NI's reach into the west of NI, and aims to reduce fuel poverty, improve health outcomes, and build community resilience in rural areas that are disproportionately affected by high energy costs.

As NI faces another challenging winter, NEA NI remains at the forefront of efforts to tackle fuel poverty, through continued political engagement, training, and practical support.

SUPPORTING FERMANAGH AND OMAGH HOUSEHOLDS TO SAVE ENERGY, SAVE MONEY AND STAY WARM

COMMUNITY ENERGY SAVER PROJECT

National Energy Action (NEA NI), supported by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Ulster Garden Villages, is delivering a **Community Energy Saver Project** across the Fermanagh and Omagh District.

The project will provide free practical support for households experiencing or at risk of fuel poverty.

Support for Households

The project provides a range of direct support services, including:

- Energy and income maximisation advice for vulnerable households
- Assistance to reduce energy costs and improve home energy efficiency
- Advice on dealing with damp and mould
- Support accessing benefits, grants & crisis funding
- Energy debt advice and guidance on consumer rights

Training and Capacity Building for Frontline Organisations

By equipping staff and volunteers with specialist knowledge, the project will build a sustainable network of **Energy Champions** who can continue supporting vulnerable households beyond the life of the project.

All training is fully funded, tailored to local needs, and available via online or face-to-face delivery.

Training topics include:

- Fuel Poverty and Health Awareness
- Energy Efficiency Advice
- Damp and Mould Awareness
- Energy Debt Support
- NEA Level 3 Energy Awareness Qualification

How Partner Organisations Can Engage:

- Request tailored training for staff or volunteers
- Collaborate on community outreach activities
- Share project information through local networks



Contact

For further information or to book a training session, please contact:

Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk

Tel: 028 9023 9909



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí



Ulster
Garden
Villages

NORTHERN IRELAND TRAINING

National Energy Action NI offers a range of learning options relating to fuel poverty, fuel debt, energy efficiency and more. Our courses are available in a variety of formats, including webinars and face-to-face to ensure that organisations can access our training in a way that is convenient to them.

AUTUMN 2026 TRAINING DATES

WEBINARS

- **Understanding Fuel Poverty and Health in Northern Ireland: Impacts on Physical and Mental Health**
Thursday 1 October 2026, 9:30am – 12:00pm
- **Introduction to Domestic Energy Efficiency**
Thursday 15 October 2026, 9:30am – 12:00pm
- **Changing Energy Related Behaviour**
Tuesday 27 October, 9:30am – 12:00pm

QUALIFICATIONS

- **NEA/City & Guilds Energy Awareness 6281-01 (Level 3 Award)**
Monday 5, Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 October 2026
Exam: Wednesday 14 October 2026
- **Introduction to Domestic Renewable Low Carbon Technologies (Level 2 Award)**
Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 November 2026, 9:30am – 12:00pm

For further information and course fees, please contact Nichola MacDougall, Training Officer NI on 028 9023 9909 or Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk.

Our in-person training courses and webinars, continue to prove extremely popular with excellent feedback:



To find out more information on our Northern Ireland training courses, please visit: www.nea.org.uk/training-and-education/northern-ireland-courses.

THE NORTHERN EXPOSURE PROGRAMME

THE WARM AND WELL PROJECT

The **Belfast Warm and Well Project** was established to support local households struggling to keep their homes warm, by providing advice, practical support, and where appropriate financial assistance to stay warm and well. **301 households received support.**

INSIGHTS (301 HOUSEHOLDS)

- 79% of households lived in Social Housing or the Private Rented Sector
- 16% were owner occupiers and 4% were in temporary accommodation for homelessness
- 78% had an income of less than 16k of which 23% had an income of less than £8,000
- Those who ran out of gas, electric and oil: 85%
- Those who have been/are in fuel debt: 65%
- Reliance on emergency credit factored into weekly budgets: 41%
- Those who regularly borrow from family or friends to buy energy: 39%
- 6% had taken a loan to buy energy
- 44% of households had children under 18
- Those with mobility issues: 45%
- Those with a chronic health condition: 59%
- Those with a mental health condition: 88%
- Those with a cardiovascular condition: 37%
- Those with a recognised disability: 61%

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 2025/2026

- 29 Community & statutory Group information events attended
- 20 free Energy Efficiency sessions delivered to
- voluntary and community groups

Our energy efficiency sessions and community talks continue to prove extremely popular with excellent feedback:

"We really appreciate your support at our groups, and I know that our clients benefit greatly. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the session." — National Energy Action NI partner

"The Carer feedback has been so positive from the session. We will certainly link in with you again for more sessions, as they are so well received." — National Energy Action NI partner



Our NI Training Officer, Nichola MacDougall, at a local community event

If you would like to arrange an Energy Efficiency session, please contact Hugh.McVeigh@nea.org.uk.



TARGETED/WARM SPACES INITIATIVE OCTOBER 2025 – FEBRUARY 2026 PROGRAMME

Upper Andersonstown Community Forum were overwhelmed with the numbers wishing to register for our Winter initiatives, kindly supported by National Energy Action (NEA NI) and the Public Health Agency (PHA). It is no exaggeration to state we could have filled these Workshops, twice over. That said, all projects were a tremendous success allowing 214 local residents to avail of our socially engaging activities, while staying warm and saving energy costs at home. We ensured that our programmes were fully inclusive through our extensive community database and were delighted to engage with our growing Syrian community through our Partnership with "Happy Lives Together NI". Our Christmas dinner was a huge success (with over 110 participants), as was our Certificate celebratory lunch, with our Line dancers.



Line Dancing Certificate Presentation Lunch



Lots of energy from our Dancers



Waltzing down to Texas (or Tullymore will do at a push)



Learning together, enjoying good food and a chat



Multi-cultural cooking class



One of our seasonal craft making workshops



Big Winner at our Christmas Dinner

Once again, a huge thank you from UACF staff
Volunteers and user groups.

We look forward to further successful partnership
working with NEA NI in the years ahead.

FACT SHEETS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT DISTRICTS

NEA NI has compiled Fact Sheets for each of Northern Ireland's 11 Local Government Districts. These provide a picture of some of the drivers and impacts of fuel poverty in each area, and outline our policy recommendations for the NI Executive, Assembly and local councils.

Our recently updated fact sheets are available at: www.nea.org.uk/northern-ireland/reports-ni/fact-sheets-for-ni-local-government-districts.



AUTUMN DATES FOR THE DIARY

- **All-Party Group (APG) on Fuel Poverty**

The APG on Fuel Poverty provides a platform to advocate for policies that address fuel poverty in Northern Ireland. The next two meetings will aim to take place in September and November, and we will be in touch closer to the time to confirm the dates. For updates on the APG, please [subscribe](#) to our NEA NI mailing list.

- **Wednesday 18 November: National Energy Action #FuelPovertyAwarenessDay**

We need all of our stakeholders and partners to help amplify the issue of households living in cold and unhealthy homes. The day will raise awareness of the issues surrounding fuel poverty, point households to help and advice, and highlight to government what needs to change to eradicate fuel poverty. Find out more here: www.nea.org.uk/what-we-do/campaigns/fpad

- **23 – 27 November: Energy Saving Week 2026**

Energy Saving Week returns this November to empower people across Northern Ireland to lower energy bills and reduce their carbon footprint. More information will be available in due course.



TURNING WASTED WIND INTO WARMER HOMES: THE ENERGYCLOUD NI STORY

Northern Ireland holds a troubling double record. It has the highest rate of wasted renewable energy in Europe — as well as one of the highest rates of chronic fuel poverty. EnergyCloud NI was founded on a simple but powerful idea: what if those two problems could solve each other?

In 2025, 662 gigawatt hours of clean wind energy was wasted in Northern Ireland. That's enough to power 220,000 homes for a year. Grid limits forced the System Operator to switch off wind farms, while consumers paid for electricity that never reached a single socket. At current retail prices, that wasted energy was worth around £200 million. Meanwhile, one in four households in Northern Ireland spent more than 10% of their income on energy, and 27% at some point went without heating or electricity.

EnergyCloud NI is a non-profit organisation that uses this wasted wind energy to deliver free electricity to households under financial stress. Rather than buying or selling energy, EnergyCloud uses smart controls to 'borrow' devices like immersion heaters in social homes to create a flexible grid asset that can absorb surplus power in real time. It's a triple win - households receive free hot water, the grid gets the flexibility it needs and (because EnergyCloud only operates after commercial markets have been settled) nobody takes on market risk.

The proof of concept is already working — and it would not be without the extraordinary commitment of our four energy supply partners. Budget Energy, Click Energy, Share Energy and SSE Airtricity are currently bearing the cost of supplying electricity to participating homes free of charge. This is not a small ask. These suppliers are absorbing real costs during the demonstration phase because they believe in what EnergyCloud represents. Without their support, there would be no free hot water, no proven protocol, and no credible path to scale. Between January and April 2026, our partnership delivered 50 nights of free hot water to families across Northern Ireland, working alongside housing partners including NIHE, Radius Housing, NB Housing and Bryson.

Scaling EnergyCloud depends on bringing more homes into that same spirit of partnership. An innovation project with NIE Networks aims to connect 1,500 social homes, while a UKRI-funded programme is targeting 100,000 low-income homes across the UK by 2030. Our longer term vision for Northern Ireland is to deliver 1,000 kWh of free electricity per year (worth about £300) to 200,000 households in fuel poverty — using less than a third of the wind energy currently being wasted.

The social return on investment is staggering. We estimate that for every £1 invested, EnergyCloud NI generates over £10 of social value. The energy is already there. The technology works. The partners — including our four pioneering supply partners — have shown it can be done. The question now is scale.

For more information visit energycloud.org/northern-ireland.

WINTER DATES FOR THE DIARY

Advice NI will be partaking in the **Mortgage Advice Bureau Roadshow in the Europa Hotel, Belfast on Tuesday 15 September, 10am – 1pm**. A representative from the Advice NI Debt and Money team will be speaking about the realities of Debt in Northern Ireland.

'Money Talk' week is from **3 – 7 November**, and as part of the week, they will be partaking in the **'Money Guiders NI Network' Event on: Conversations that Count: Strengthening Financial Confidence in NI, Thursday 6 November**. Further details can be found [here](#).

Advice NI will be holding their AGM on Thursday 19 November in Riddell Hall, Belfast from 9am – 1pm.

CONTACT US

National Energy Action (NEA NI)

1 College House, Citylink Business Park, Albert Street,
Belfast, County Antrim, BT12 4HQ



028 9023 9909



Northern.Ireland@nea.org.uk



www.nea.org.uk



NEA NI SOCIAL MEDIA CHANNELS



[NEANireland](https://twitter.com/NEANireland)



[NEANireland](https://www.facebook.com/NEANireland)



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



[national-energy-action-ni](https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-energy-action-ni)



[neanireland.bsky.social](https://bsky.app/profile/neanireland.bsky.social)

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR MAILING LIST

Subscribe to our mailing list for updates on NI training courses, our policy and advocacy work, upcoming events and our newsletter.