

NEA NORTHERN IRELAND NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2018



Action for Warm Homes
Northern Ireland



Project supported by the PHA

Welcome to the 13th Edition of the NEA Northern Ireland Newsletter!

The fact that Northern Ireland has now surpassed the longest period without a government provided NEA NI with no work respite with a busy spring and summer. Never the less, it is evident that the lack of leadership continues to prevent vital progress within policy development, which is directly affecting the fuel poor. Most importantly the long-awaited review and renewal of the fuel poverty strategy, which was promised in the draft Programme for Government 2016, has been shelved with key sections of society such as households in the private rented sector being most likely to be living in cold homes. Disappointing as this is, there have been some notable successes since our last Newsletter.

Firstly, the fourth extension of the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) has been announced by the Utility Regulator, which means the programme will continue until at least March 2020. This levy programme provides a vital lifeline to households unable to provide upfront capital costs for heating and insulation measures, and generates circa £9million for energy efficiency of which 80% is directly targeted at these householders.

The NISEP is currently under a substantial review, which will include semi structured interviews with key stakeholders involved in the programme, some customer engagement with a range of focus groups and a call for evidence to gauge opinion on the NISEP. The programme provides a vital function for the fuel poor and we urge you to respond to this call for evidence to highlight its importance to the broader fuel poverty landscape. The Fuel Poverty Coalition will be putting forward a draft response, which we hope will also assist you with your own response. The call for evidence can be obtained [here](#).

The second key event was the findings of the 2016 House Condition Survey (HCS), produced by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE), which were released in May 2016 and indicated staggering reduction in the level of fuel poverty from 42% to 22%! Further analysis of the key findings from the report are explored on page eight.

While welcoming the figures, NEA Northern Ireland also issued a health warning highlighting the fact that the field for the HCS work was carried out in 2016 when the price of home heating oil was at an all-time low, with 500 litres of oil as little as £125 which has more than doubled today. Cognisant of this time lag in reporting, the NIHE are exploring the development of a ready reckoner to capture a more real time fuel poverty measure. That said, credit should also be given to the fuel poverty programmes which have assisted thousands of households since the last HCS 2011 report and the importance of the schemes in driving down fuel poverty.

And finally, the increase in the wholesale price of energy has also put upward pressure on gas and electricity prices, evidenced by the announcement of double digit increases from most of the suppliers this autumn. This will have grave impacts for low income households alongside other pressures such as Welfare Reform and Brexit. This is even more reason for us to continue to use all existing levers, such as the Department for Communities statutory Affordable Warmth Scheme and the NISEP, to ensure that energy efficiency measures are installed to drive down household essential energy bills. Last year, we experienced one of the coldest winters in nearly a decade and as outlined in our 2017-18 UK Fuel Poverty Monitor, which we critique overleaf, people struggled to keep warm. It is therefore essential that all our key stakeholders are winter ready by providing fuel poverty initiatives including energy advice to protect and insulate households from the danger and misery that cold homes bring to households. As always, we look forward to working with you to bring about renewed action to this end.

Warm wishes

Pat Austin
Director

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A New Face for Northern Exposure!



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After nearly a decade coordinating Northern Exposure, the Project Coordinator Angela Gracey-Roger has moved on to the Energy Savings Trust (EST) NI; we would like to thank her for her immense efforts and vitality over the course of the project.

Her passion for energy efficiency and persistence for getting positive results for householders was outstanding. She has also been extremely successful in harnessing crucial stakeholder links and projects within the health sector.

We would like to wish Angela all the best in her new position and are delighted that we will continue to work closely with Angela in her new role at EST.



We would also like to welcome Hugh McVeigh who has recently been recruited as the new Project Coordinator.

Hugh brings over 20 years management experience of working with some of the most vulnerable groups in society within the voluntary and community sector.

His background in housing and homelessness prevention services, community engagement and cross sectoral partnership working on a local and regional basis will bring added benefit to programme and service delivery.

Welcome Hugh! We are delighted to have him on board!



Northern Exposure as usual is busy making referrals to a range of energy efficiency initiatives but also to additional sources of help, namely benefit entitlement checks and home safety checks.

The schemes are filling up swiftly after the very cold weather. Many householders are hearing about the project and our continued engagement with a range of health professionals and frontline workers throughout Belfast is getting the message out to key vulnerable households. We would also encourage any interested organisations or groups to contact Hugh to arrange a talk on our popular presentations on fuel poverty and health, or fuel poverty and energy efficiency or to arrange a bespoke energy efficiency session. Our most popular presentations are Fuel Poverty and Health or Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency.

For further information, please contact Hugh on 028 9023 9909 or via email: Hugh.McVeigh@nea.org.uk.



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ARE YOU WINTER READY?

After our summer heatwave, its hard to remember when storm “Emma” met up with the “Beast from the East” back in February 2018. These near arctic conditions took many of us unaware and led to widespread disruption to power and some paralysis to public services.

With winter fast approaching, now is a good time to think about your winter warmth plan, for example, what would you do in the event of a power cut?

NIE Networks advise to be prepared:

- 1) Do you know where your household fuses and trip switches are? Know where they are so as you can check if there is a problem with your own power supply.
- 2) Keep a supply of batteries for radios and torches.
- 3) Know where to locate your candles and matches are. Take care when using candles!

Additionally, if you are dependent on electrical equipment for healthcare, you can join NIE Networks Critical Care Register. This priority service ensures that critical care customers can obtain up-to-date information if their power is lost.

Vulnerable customers, in conjunction with their healthcare advisors if appropriate, should consider how they would cope with a prolonged loss of electricity supply and prepare a personal action plan.

The latest NEA winter edition of Energy Efficiency Information and Advice leaflet **“Stay Warm Stay Healthy During Winter”** contains further useful information on utilising oil clubs to purchase cheaper oil, accessing insulation and boiler replacement schemes, tips on how to save money on your energy costs, what to do in a power cut and winter freeze advice as well as things to consider when comparing and switching to get the best value for money to meet your needs.

We also deliver energy efficiency workshops and presentations to all interested parties and groups. If you work with local community groups and would like to discuss having a workshop delivered, then please give us a call.

Also, to find out if you are eligible for financial support for cavity wall insulation, loft insulation or the installation of a new central heating system, please call us on 028 9023 9909.

Bumper Training Year for NEA!



Throughout the course of the year **National Energy Action** (NEA) trained 50 individuals, who showed tremendous commitment to energy efficiency in the NEA/City & Guilds Energy Awareness training. 23 of these individuals were staff from the **Northern Ireland Housing Executive** (NIHE), most of whom deliver the Affordable Warmth Scheme through their area grants offices.

The three day training course is designed for delegates who wish to gain or further their knowledge of domestic energy efficiency and aimed at those who are in a position to provide energy advice. The course provides delegates with an understanding of energy advice and the knowledge required to deliver energy advice to householders. The one day examination following the three days training leads to the Level 3 City and Guilds 6281-01 qualification.

In August, the NIHE staff received their NEA/City & Guilds Energy Awareness Level 3 certificates, which were presented by Siobhan McCauley, Director of Regional Services NIHE and Pat Austin, Director NEA NI.

Roisin O'Neill, Energy Efficiency Schemes Manager NIHE, said of the training:

“NEA trainers were very professional throughout the three-day attendance and their delivery was to a very high standard, all staff who attended really enjoyed the course. Both practical and theory content has now enhanced their understanding of fuel poverty and domestic energy and will help our staff provide a better service to our customers.”

Comments from participants included:

“Very enjoyable informative course. Would fully recommend”.

“Fascinating, engaging, highly informative and also entertaining and supportive”

“The course has helped me to help others understand and adhere to energy efficiency. I will share this with vulnerable consumers and everyone I come into contact with.”

Additionally firmus energy undertook training, continuing their commitment to energy efficiency for all personnel. Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Health Improvement Team are also now qualified to this high standard in Energy Awareness.

We extend our congratulations to all the successful candidates!

For further information on bespoke and forthcoming training, please contact Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk.



Housing Executive

*NIHE Affordable Warmth staff
receiving their City & Guilds
Energy Awareness certificates.*

Energy Efficiency in the Home

Getting the most from the Energy we use

National Energy Action (NEA) NI, supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is offering a **FREE** two hour interactive workshop on energy efficiency in the home for community groups throughout Northern Ireland.

The following topics are included:

- Energy and where we use it
- Energy efficient heating
- Controls on the central heating system
- Energy efficient lighting and appliances
- Keeping the heat where it is needed — reducing heat loss
- Comparing and switching energy suppliers



These workshops are focused on making energy efficiency come alive for those who attend!

For further information and for booking please contact

Nichola MacDougall by phone on 028 9023 9909 or

via email: Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk



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Executive



UK Fuel Poverty Monitor 2017–18

National Energy Action (NEA) and **Energy Action Scotland** (EAS) have produced the annual UK Fuel Poverty Monitor (UK FPM) report since 2002.

The report specifically aims to review, compare and contrast fuel poverty policies in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales. It also provides an opportunity to identify cross-nation learning to inform policy makers and practitioners.

This year we examined the major challenges the UK has experienced during the severe cold weather in February 2018. We would like to express our thanks to all the stakeholders who helped us by completing our stakeholder interviews and the call for evidence. Through the qualitative and quantitative research, the report sets out UK wide policy recommendations.

In Northern Ireland, we had several storms with prolonged periods of snow, ice and sub-zero temperatures peaking at -7°C in March. The #BeastfromtheEast caused wide-spread disruption, particularly in counties Down and Armagh. Patients and staff alike experienced disruptions getting to work or getting access to hospitals, families were stranded with many requiring help and support from voluntary sector organisations. There was a noted surge in demand for emergency fuel and food for very vulnerable households. What stood out in Northern Ireland was the immense solidarity, efforts and dedication across the sectors from working extra hours to creative responses in the face of adversity. Farmers used tractors and 4x4s to transport healthcare professionals and patients, local community organisations pooled resources for food parcels and emergency fuel statutory organisations and utilities kept social media updated. What was absent was an Northern Ireland wide cold weather plan which has formed one of our key recommend actions. Alongside this, we recommended a contingency fund for frontline organisations and greater powers for local government to implement emergency responses.

The full report can be downloaded from the NEA website by clicking [here](#).



New Fuel Poverty Resource for Politicians and Frontline Workers

NEA NI has produced a Fuel Poverty Action Guide for elected representatives and frontline practitioners.

The Fuel Poverty Action Guide was officially launched at the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings on Tuesday 26 June 2018, by Steven Agnew MLA, who also provided the keynote address noting that fuel poverty remains a pressing issue for many families across Northern Ireland.

The event was attended by a range of stakeholders including MLAs, Healthcare professionals, Utility organisations and the community and voluntary sector. A presentation was also provided by Robert Clements, Sustainable Development Manager with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive highlighting the main findings from the latest [House Condition Survey](#).

The guide is designed to be practical and easy to use for stakeholders, and helps identify the best solutions for householders who are worried about keeping their homes warm and paying for energy.

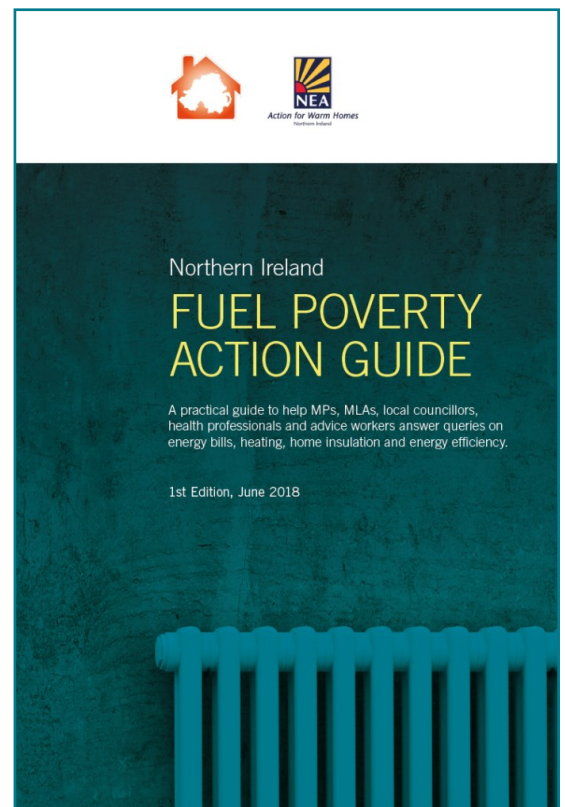
In Northern Ireland there is help and support from a range of organisations and initiatives to help tackle fuel poverty and the guide signposts users to these relevant services.

There are a number of organisations who provide energy and financial advice throughout Northern Ireland, so the aim of the guide is to provide a step by step process for the most likely issues raised by householders.

Key topics within the guide cover paying for energy, practical help for warmer homes, income maximisation and extra help for vulnerable customers. In addition there are a number of useful contacts and websites.

The Fuel Poverty Action Guide is available for download by clicking [here](#) and will be continually updated in line with changing initiatives and contacts. Speaker presentations can also be downloaded in PDF format by clicking on the relevant link above.

For further enquiries, please contact Lucy Cochrane, Policy and Campaigns Officer, NEA Northern Ireland on 028 9023 9909 or by email: Lucy.Cochrane@nea.org.uk.





**energy
saving
trust**

Energy Saving Week takes place in Northern Ireland from **Monday 5th to Friday 9th November 2018**.

The Energy Saving Trust (EST), alongside other stakeholders, will be promoting Energy Saving Week with a Northern Ireland awareness campaign.

This year, the campaign will use social media to make a huge drive to inspire primary school children to take up the Energy Saving Week 'schools challenge', encouraging pupils to carry out four simple tasks to save energy. This is a great way to get children thinking about saving energy in the home and how simple changes can make such a big impact on the environment.

NEA Northern Ireland along with our other key stakeholders, will be supporting the campaign and there will be several useful energy saving tips posted on Twitter over the course of the week.

Join us in getting the key messages out through your networks by using the hashtag #energysavingweek.

For more information about the campaign contact Angela.Gracey-Roger@est.org.uk.



This year's focus on primary schools will encourage kids to start thinking about energy efficiency – with fun tasks to complete, including:

- Turning off lights when you leave a room; and
- Turning items on standby.

On completion, pupils will receive a certificate and an 'Energy Hero' status!

#energysavingweek

fuel poverty
repairs and improvements
house decent homes
NORTHERN IRELAND **condition**
survey MAIN
household profile REPORT 2016
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Findings from the 2016 House Condition Survey

The much anticipated 2016 House Condition Survey (HCS) was released in May of this year. The headline figures for fuel poverty saw a reduction from 42% to 22%, which NEA NI welcomed. However, it is vital to point out that is referenced overleaf, the fieldwork was collected back in 2016, when a fill of 500 litres of oil cost £125. Today, the same fill of oil will cost £285, and with 68% of households in Northern Ireland still reliant on domestic home heating oil, a non-regulated fuel, we can expect that fuel poverty figures are currently much higher than the 22%.

The formula for calculating fuel poverty consists of a set ratio measuring net income, fuel cost and energy consumption. Northern Ireland still adheres to the 10% definition to define fuel poor households as spending more than 10% to achieve a satisfactory level of heating.

Key findings:

- There are approximately 780,000 domestic dwellings in Northern Ireland.
- Owner Occupier is the largest tenure at 63% with the Private Rented sector and Social Housing sector at 17% and 16% respectively.
- **Fuel Poverty decreased to 22%, 160,000 households.**
- **The mean SAP rating improved from 59.63 in 2011 to 64.84**
- 99% of dwellings had central heating.
- Oil remains the largest type of heating source at 68% of households (no change from 2011 report).
- More than half (52%) of households living in old properties (pre-1919) were living in fuel poverty.
- 55% of households living in fuel poverty had an annual income of less than £10,399.

A full copy of the report can be downloaded from the Housing Executive website by clicking [here](#).

'Warm at Home' Scheme to help Strabane Households Convert to Natural Gas

Strabane residents are set to benefit from a new funding scheme which will help convert their households to natural gas as part of wider efforts aimed at making homes more energy efficient within the western region.

SGN Natural Gas was approved funding from the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) 2018-19 to help connect homes in the Co. Tyrone town to natural gas central heating, including insulation and energy efficiency measures.

The SGN Natural Gas scheme approved by the Utility Regular offers households the chance to convert to a grant funded natural gas heating system. In addition, there are a range of connection offers already available for residents who wish to make the switch to natural gas such as 0% finance and £500 cashback.

The Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Councillor John Boyle who attended the launch of the scheme, welcomed the NISEP funding and said he was particularly pleased the scheme will benefit households in the Council area.

Councillor Boyle said: "I welcome the news that both private renting tenants and owner occupiers in the Council area who meet the relevant criteria can benefit from applying for a range of energy efficiency measures through the NISEP scheme.

"The western area suffers from high levels of energy inefficiency and the NISEP scheme, along with the other available schemes offer help to householders to insulate their homes and upgrade their heating systems in time for the colder months ahead."

Darren Young, SGN Natural Gas Head of Business Development, confirmed that residents within Strabane making the switch to natural gas would also avail of a free natural gas meter installation, subject to terms and conditions.

He explained: "We are committed to ensuring as many residents as possible are enjoying the benefits of natural gas, we are also delighted, as part of our wider strategy to play a key role in effectively addressing the fuel poverty issues within our network area, where approximately one in every two homes are currently considered to be in fuel poverty."

"We now have over 2,000 connectable properties in the Strabane town area and we would encourage householders who have not already contacted us to get in touch as soon as possible to establish if they are eligible for NISEP funding which is distributed on a first come, first served basis. We have been delighted with the number of homes and businesses making the switch to date"

"Natural gas is convenient, reliable, easy for budgeting and the cleanest of the commonly used fossil fuels. Homes utilising natural gas also have the option of using a pre-pay card to top up your natural gas supply from as little as £5 so there are a wide range of benefits to making the switch."

For more information on connecting your home to natural gas, please visit www.sgnnaturalgas.co.uk.



Photo from left, Darren Young, Head of Business Development SGN Natural Gas, Mayor of Derry City and Strabane District Council, Cllr John Boyle and Chris McMullan, Domestic Sales Representative SGN Natural Gas pictured at the launch of the NISEP 'Warm at Home' scheme to help households in Strabane convert their home energy supply to natural gas as part of wider efforts to make homes more energy efficient within the western region.





World Health Organisation International Healthy Cities Conference 2018

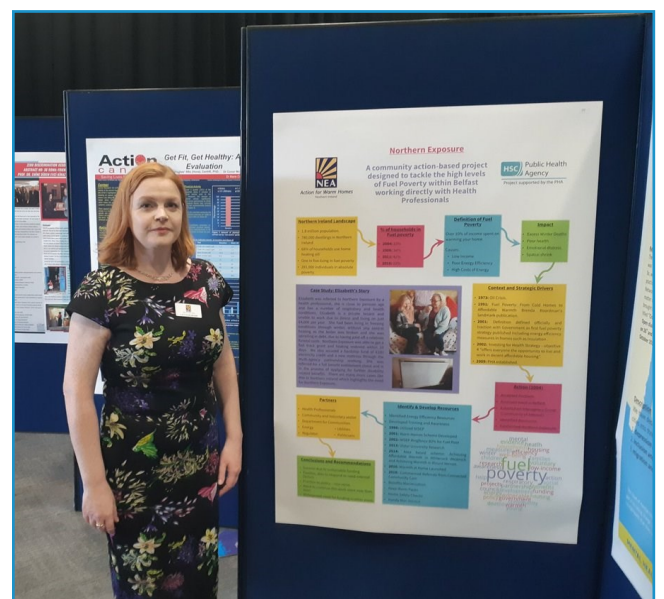
The [World Health Organisation](#) International Healthy Cities Conference provides a unique opportunity to join innovators, political decision-makers and experts in the international community in forging greater health, well-being and sustainable development in cities and urban settings. It provides a wealth of examples of pioneering initiatives; opportunities for learning, knowledge exchange and collaboration; and ideas and solutions to take home and apply to local challenges.

By engaging leaders from health, environment, planning, transport, housing, technology, education, science and other sectors, the Conference aims to inspire delegates and to reimagine Healthy Cities in the context of tomorrow's challenges. It also emphasises the role of cities in implementing the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This year, encouraged by Belfast City Councillor Brian Heading, NEA NI submitted an abstract about our Northern Exposure project. Northern Exposure is a perfect working example of how the NICE NG6 guidelines '*Excess winter deaths and illness and the health risks associated with cold homes*' operate in practice. We were delighted that our resulting submission was accepted.

A substantial case study, which was illustrated by a poster exhibit was subsequently submitted evaluating in greater detail the impact of the project. It outlined the journey and insights into the inception of the project, with a timeline of how the project evolved, including the importance of working in partnership with Health and others.

We commend the Public Health Agency for their support of Northern Exposure, and we are also grateful to our stakeholders and staff past and present for making this project what it is.



Lucy Cochrane, Policy & Campaigns Officer NEA NI, at the conference with the NEA poster abstract submission.

Contact Us

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Action for Warm Homes
Northern Ireland

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Useful Contacts

Age NI:	080 8808 7575
Advice NI:	028 9064 5919
Bryson Energy:	080 0142 2865
Volunteer Now:	028 9023 2020
Engage with Age:	028 9073 5696
Consumer Council NI:	080 0121 6022
Housing Rights Service:	028 9024 5640
Northern Ireland Water:	034 5744 0088
Welfare Reform Helpline:	080 8802 0020
NIE Networks Customer Helpline:	034 5764 3643



SAVE THE DATE!

**Fuel Poverty
Awareness Day**