The Energy Project

citizens advice Northumberland



Laura Ratcliffe
Project Lead

Funded by
British Gas
energy trust

Big Energy Saving Network 2019/20

Consumer sessions

- Increase awareness of household energy issues
- Enable energy savings
- Know where to access further help/advice

Training for frontline staff and volunteers

- Increase awareness of fuel poverty risks and warning signs
- Increase the opportunity for those in or at risk of fuel poverty to seek help

Fuel Poverty in Northumberland

- Over 15,000 households in Fuel Poverty (latest data 2017)
- Fuel Poverty affects people of all ages, in all household types
- Rural areas particularly at risk within our county
- Can result in poor health and wellbeing, unsafe coping strategies, and even risk of death
- **Those most in need may not actively seek help**



The impact of Fuel Poverty

Children

- Increased risk poor health (asthma/respiratory diseases)
- More days off school
- Increased hospital admittance
- Reduced educational attainment
- Weight gain = problems in later life

Teenagers and young people

- Increased mental health risk
- Social stigma = not wanting to invite friends home = impact on friendships/social skills
- Longer term confidence issues
- Higher risk poor health days

Adults

- Poor wellbeing; basic needs not met
- Health risks; cold/flu, cardiovascular & respiratory diseases
- Impact on daily tasks (work, school run, meal preparation)
- Risk of depression/anxiety/isolation
- Impact on existing health condition

Older People

- Worsen health conditions (rheumatoid disease, arthritis)
- More difficult to keep warm
- Cold/flu risk; worse impact
- Impact on cost to health services
- Reduced dexterity = frustration
- Morbidity x3 = avoidable deaths

How can you help?

Navigating the ‘energy minefield’



In England, fuel poverty is currently defined by low household income and high energy costs. Positive interventions are therefore linked to addressing these issues by:

- Maximising household income
- Lowering energy costs
- Increasing household energy efficiency

Every interaction is an opportunity. You are part of the ‘Big Energy Saving Network’.

The Energy Project

The Energy Project

citizens advice

We offer in depth energy advice through thorough assessment of household circumstances and specific energy needs.

Our specialist energy advice is free, confidential, impartial and can be delivered via telephone or face to face contact.

- We aim to:
- Help people to stay warm and well within their homes
- Raise awareness of energy related issues
- Empower people to feel more in control
- Have a positive impact on health and wellbeing

Providing specialist advice

Advisers assist with a range of energy issues including:



- Understanding bills
- Ensuring payments are correct
- Switching/tariff comparison
- Addressing debt or payment issues
- Energy efficiency advice
- Checking entitlements for additional grants/funding
- Checking entitlements for additional benefits
- Helping to resolve disputes with suppliers or complex billing issues
- Local support fund – those eligible could be awarded energy efficiency starter kits or emergency fuel vouchers

Reducing energy costs - savvy switching

Consumers can reduce their energy costs by shopping around for the best deal. This could include switching tariff or supplier, although individual considerations should be made before committing to change.

What we often hear...

I've been with British Gas for twenty years; I don't want to change...

Ooh I wouldn't know where to start!

I won't be able to switch because I've got a smart meter...

The salesman told me that I'd only have to pay £35 per month, so I'm switching to them...

My friend says I should get the same supplier as them...

I can't compare because I don't use the internet...

There are a lot of myths and misconceptions in relation to switching. Our switching checklist leaflet helps to make the process easier.

Savings could be staring you in the face…

Citizens Advice can help you to understand your energy bills

Useful to know where to find your **‘Personal Projection’** which tells you if you can make savings by switching to a different tariff



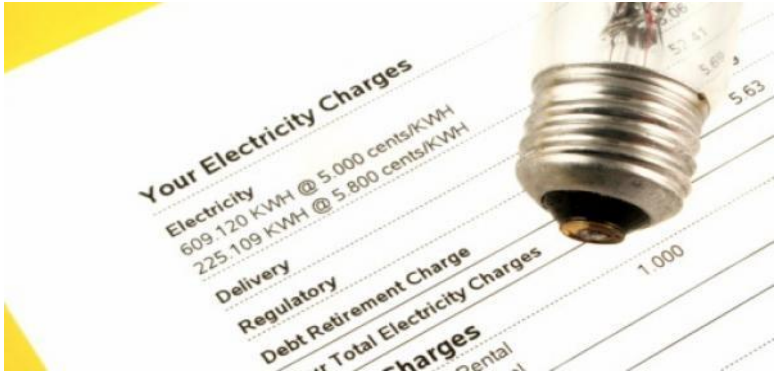
Navigating your energy bill (video)

Finding the best deal

Always use the Citizens Advice price comparison tool or an Ofgem accredited price comparison website to ensure that the comparison is thorough and impartial. Other sites may be inaccurate or receive commission to recommend particular suppliers.

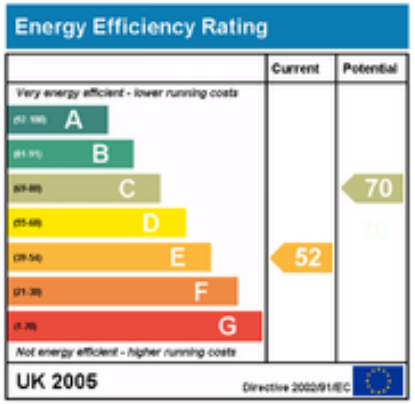
Additional considerations include:

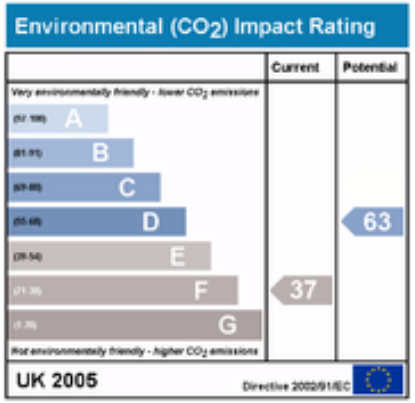
- small supplier failures
- fuel arrears
- online tariffs considerably cheaper
- off gas areas (oil clubs)



Energy Saving quick wins

Wash clothes at a lower temperature	£52
Install hot water cylinder jacket	£50
Programming heating system	£75
Use a washing up bowl	£25
Switch off standby	£30
Replace all light bulbs with LEDs	£35
Do one less wash a week	£5
Turn off lights	£14
TOTAL:	**£286**





Warm Home Discount Scheme

Consumers may be able to get £140 discount off their electricity bill under the Warm Home Discount Scheme if they're either:

- getting the guarantee credit element of Pension Credit (**core group**, automatic payment)
- on a low income (**broader group**, need to apply every year) Lots of people unaware that they can claim this!

Noteworthy considerations:

Only larger suppliers offer WHD; eligibility criteria varies with each supplier; applications for broader group open and close at different times for each supplier; clients may have time to switch and apply with a new supplier if they are unsuccessful with current supplier.

Priority Services Register

Offers extra services free of charge for households that include people who:

- are of pensionable age
- are disabled or chronically sick
- have a long-term medical condition
- have a hearing or visual impairment or additional communication needs
- have children under 5 years
- are in a vulnerable situation (temporary or longer term)

To be added to the Priority Services Register, consumers simply need to contact their energy supplier. However, signing up for PSR with distribution networks (Northern Powergrid) may offer additional peace of mind.

Priority Services Register

Services offered by PSR vary with each supplier but can include:

- free gas safety checks
- assistance to read meters
- bills in another format



Distribution networks also offer PSR, and will inform eachother and the energy supplier. This is particularly important for households where someone is reliant on an electricity supply to meet their health needs (e.g. stairlift or medication which requires refrigeration).

Northern Powergrid PSR

Northern Gas Networks PSR



Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

- Can offer larger grants for efficient boilers and insulation
- Available to people receiving certain benefits
- If you're not on certain benefits you could still get a discount on some insulation measures
- If you're not on certain benefits but on a low income or have a health condition you may be able to get help under the 'ECO local flexibility' scheme which is offered via Northumberland County Council

Emergency Central Heating Offer (ECHO)

- Referrals in Northumberland via The Energy Project
- Offers fully funded, fast boiler repair or replacement to those eligible - owner occupiers in receipt of certain benefits and in a 'no heat' situation

Further information

Citizens Advice Northumberland - can seek advice or access self help online

The Energy Project - specialist energy advice and casework

Ofgem - good for policy news or info about failed suppliers, also advice for businesses

National Energy Action (NEA) - Fuel Poverty action charity - offer energy advice via Warm and Safe Homes Advice, a range of training (including some free sessions) and resources

Simple Energy Advice - information about energy savings, energy grants, and simple online home efficiency survey tool

Centre for Sustainable Energy - downloadable issue specific advice leaflets

Community Action Northumberland - information about OilCAN club and Warm Hubs in rural areas

Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service- offer free home safety checks, including installation of smoke alarms and issuing households with Carbon Monoxide alarms (not installed)

Northern Gas Networks - offer free installation of locking cooker valves, can help to connect off-gas households to the gas network

Remember…

- Ofgem advice relating to Coronavirus
- **Maximise income?** Eligible for additional benefits? Help with debts? Difficulty budgeting?
- **Switching?** Only with individual considerations. May get a better tariff with same supplier - check bill
- **Energy Efficiency?** Awareness and small or large scale measures; may be eligible for help with costs. Energy Project starter kits available.
- **Additional services or discounts?** Warm Home Discount and Priority Services Register, other local support services and funds

Think - where do you fit in?

Start conversations...

Quick wins - make it simple

How can you help?

Stay alert - every interaction is an opportunity

Know where to find further information

Get in touch...

lauraratcliffe@citizensadvicenorthumberland.org.uk

Thank You!

Thanks for taking the time to complete this session, we hope you have found it helpful.

If you would like more details about energy advice, the Energy Project or to work together to better support our mutual clients, please contact me at lauraratcliffe@citizensadvicenorthumberland.org.uk

Energy Project referrals

Tel: 01670 339960 Email: energy@citizensadvicenorthumberland.org.uk