

Toasting success: New initiative helping to keep the temperature up on Fuel Poverty Awareness Day and beyond

National Grid Affordable Warmth Solutions (AWS) has teamed up with Citizens Advice Coventry to tackle fuel poverty and help the poorest people across the country

17 Feb 2017

- Scheme provides practical advice on energy costs, benefits and debt management and is on track to save hard up families £553,000
- One couple found to be eligible for almost £13,000 worth of help
- Across the country AWS projects have assisted over 30,000 homes in fuel poverty

This winter has seen the launch of a successful new initiative by National Grid Gas Distribution and Citizens Advice Coventry to bring warmth to vulnerable people across the country.

Today (Friday 17 February) is Fuel Poverty Awareness Day, an annual event run by NEA (National Energy Action) a charity seeking to end fuel poverty.

The event provides an opportunity to highlight the problems faced by those struggling to keep warm in their homes as well as showcasing work being undertaken to tackle the issues.

One such initiative was launched last October by Affordable Warmth Solutions (AWS), a community interest company set up by National Grid to tackle fuel poverty. It has involved working with Citizens Advice Coventry to launch a new service to help households across the Midlands, East Anglia, North London and the North West deal with fuel poverty issues.

The scheme offers advice and support in seven main areas. They are:

- advice on making the most of incomes and managing debt
- energy tariff advice including switching;
- energy efficiency measures such as loft and cavity insulation; advice on boiler replacements and heating solutions;
- support to help people manage their household budgets;

- home energy saving measures and aids and adaptations to improve health and quality of life ;
- aligning customers to priority services registers including, Western Power Distribution and Severn Trent; and
- Referrals to third-party agencies, for example, for advice on health and wellbeing.

Since its inception the initiative has achieved these major successes:

- 262 referrals to Citizens Advice Coventry
- £553,000 of potential additional income for vulnerable, hard-up householders through cost savings and benefit entitlements
- 53 people signed up to the Priority Services Register
- One vulnerable family receiving almost £13,000 worth of support

Other recent projects have been delivered in places including Derbyshire, Walsall, Suffolk, Manchester, Westminster and Barking and Dagenham (See notes to editors for more information).

Jeremy Nesbitt, Managing Director, AWS said: "Fuel Poverty Day provides an opportunity to focus on both the heart-breaking issue of people struggling to afford to heat their homes and the positive steps we can do to tackle this. We in AWS are committed to doing all we can to help alleviate fuel poverty."

Jeremy added: "The new initiative we recently launched working alongside Citizens Advice Coventry is going really well and together we're helping many people live in more comfortable and warmer homes, whilst maximising their opportunity for additional income.

"We hope to continue this good work and will look to implement similar schemes elsewhere that complement our highly successful programme."

For more information on the scheme people can write to 35 Homer Road, Solihull, B91 3QJ telephone: (0121) 623 2052, email: admin@ngrid-aws.org.uk or visit www.affordablewarmthsolutions.org.uk

For information on whether you are eligible for a free connection to the gas distribution network visit <http://www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/Services/Gas-distribution-connections/Free-Gas-Connection/>

For more information on Fuel Poverty Day and the working of the NEA visit <http://www.nea.org.uk/campaigns-policy/fuel-poverty-awareness-day/>

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Notes for editors

Notes to Editors:

National Grid Affordable Warmth Solutions

Who We Are & What We Do

Established by National Grid in 2008, Affordable Warmth Solutions is a Community Interest Company that assists qualifying homes in the 25% most deprived areas in England by offering:

- New gas connections to consumers not currently connected to the National Grid gas distribution network
- Free or discounted gas central heating systems to qualifying households
- Income maximisation, energy efficiency and tariff advice.

Since its inception National Grid Affordable Warmth Solutions has delivered schemes across its gas distribution regions as well as a small number outside of these areas.

It works with a number of partners with its latest initiative being a partnership with Citizens Advice Coventry.

Community projects have supported 9000 homes reducing the future fuel bills of customers in fuel poverty by almost £25million and also cutting CO2 by circa 625,000 tonnes.

Over £800,000 has been put into innovative new energy efficiency solutions to help tackle fuel poverty as a result of National Grid's Energy Efficiency Innovation Awards.

Case Study (from Coventry)

Recently we helped Steve and Sarah (not their real names) with almost £13,000 of support.

Sarah is being treated for a prolapsed disc, daily headaches and dizziness and is being cared for by her partner Steve, who also works full time.

The couple recently moved in with Sarah's elderly parents to support them as her father has Parkinson's disease, a heart condition and mobility issues, while her mother has high blood pressure and mobility issues.

The four were living on Steve's wages.

How we helped:

- **Advised Sarah she was eligible for Personnel Independent Payments (£5,460 a year)**
- **Advised that her mother was entitled to Attendance Allowance (£4,277 a year) and Carer's Allowance (£3,229 a year)**
- **We registered the household Priority Services Register**
- **Arranged a local authority 'needs assessment' for aids and adaptations to the home**
- **Gave support for accessing funding from their energy provider for loft and wall cavity insulation and provided help in finding suppliers**
- **Provided an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) listing energy saving recommendations**
- **Helped the family identify the most appropriate energy tariff**
- **Gave advice on how to access support as carers**
- **Directed them to other support agencies who could provide help such as Age UK, the local Fire and Rescue Service home fire safety, Citizens Advice Consumer Service and Shelter**

This totalled £12,966 worth of support.

Other projects

Derbyshire Healthy Home project – Derbyshire Country Council

Walsall Advanced Retrofit Monitoring Group – Walsall Housing Group

CityWest Homes Limited – Reducing energy bills in tower blocks

Warm and Healthy Park Homes – Suffolk Coastal District Council

Southway Housing Trust: Extending the benefits of solar PV(photovoltaic – ie solar electric) in low-rise flats

The next challenge is to effectively share learning from these innovations and see these initial successes repeated across the country.

In June and July of 2016 tests were done across the Barking and Dagenham area to see how whether Facebook advertising could help increase awareness of the free or discounted gas connection service provided through the fuel poor network extension scheme. Adverts exceeded expectations with over 3,000 clicks seeking further

information.

Notes to Editors:

National Grid is pivotal to the energy systems in the UK and the north eastern United States. We aim to serve customers well and efficiently, supporting the communities in which we operate and making possible the energy systems of the future.

National Grid in the UK:

- We own and operate the electricity transmission network in England and Wales, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. We also operate, but do not own, the Scottish networks. Our networks comprise approximately 7,200 kilometres (4,474 miles) of overhead line, 1,500 kilometres (932 miles) of underground cable and 342 substations.
- We own and operate the gas National Transmission System in Great Britain, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. Our network comprises approximately 7,660 kilometres (4,760 miles) of high-pressure pipe and 618 above-ground installations.
- As Great Britain's System Operator (SO) we make sure gas and electricity is transported safely and efficiently from where it is produced to where it is consumed. From April 2019, Electricity System Operator (ESO) is a new standalone business within National Grid, legally separate from all other parts of the National Grid Group. This will provide the right environment to deliver a balanced and impartial ESO that can realise real benefits for consumers as we transition to a more decentralised, decarbonised electricity system.
- Other UK activities mainly relate to businesses operating in competitive markets outside of our core regulated businesses; including interconnectors, gas metering activities and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) importation terminal – all of which are now part of National Grid Ventures. National Grid Property is responsible for the management, clean-up and disposal of surplus sites in the UK. Most of these are former gas works.

Find out more about the energy challenge and how National Grid is helping find solutions to some of the challenges we face at <https://www.nationalgrid.com/group/news>

National Grid undertakes no obligation to update any of the information contained in this release, which speaks only as at the date of this release, unless required by law or regulation.

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