Big Energy Saving Network
Training Presentation

Andrea Bedward
Energy Champion/Fin Cap Trainer
Citizens Advice Southwark (CAS)

A Warm Welcome

Citizens Advice Southwark (CAS)

- CAS offers independent, confidential and impartial information to assist with legal, debt, housing and other problems for those people living, working or studying in Southwark

- Each year, Citizens Advice helps millions of people find a way forward. We do this by **providing free advice, education and support, and influencing policies and support that affect our clients**. Everything we do - and the way we work - benefits individuals and society.

Why do we give Energy Advice?

- Raise the awareness of problems caused by living in a cold home and the effect on health and wellbeing.
- Increased consumer confidence to deal with energy issues.
- Integrate energy advice into the welfare rights advice offer.

What's available?

- Income maximisation advice
- Reducing costs by switching tariff or provider or changing payment method
- Advice around energy efficiency
- Bills and metering to reduce costs
- Warm Home Discount
- Priority Services Register
- Fuel debt problems
- Welfare Benefits checks and assistance

Useful Websites

- **CAS Office & Opening Times**

https://www.citizensadvicesouthwark.org.uk/

- **Energy Advice Booklet**
- **https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/Public/BESN%2018-19/EnergyBestDeal_v2.pdf**
- **Citizens Advice Energy Comparison Website**
- **https://energycompare.citizensadvice.org.uk/**
- **Citizens Advice - Energy Advice Website**

https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/en

Useful Websites

- **Smart Meters**

  www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/Public/BESN%2018- 19/energyleafletSM(1).pdf

- **Get Help With Bills & Supply**

  www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/Public/BESN%2018-19/Digital_PDF_Leaflet3_updated_phone_v1%20(1).pdf

- **Make sure your home is energy efficient**

  www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/Public/BESN%201819/Digital_PDF_Leaflet1_v1%20(1).pdf

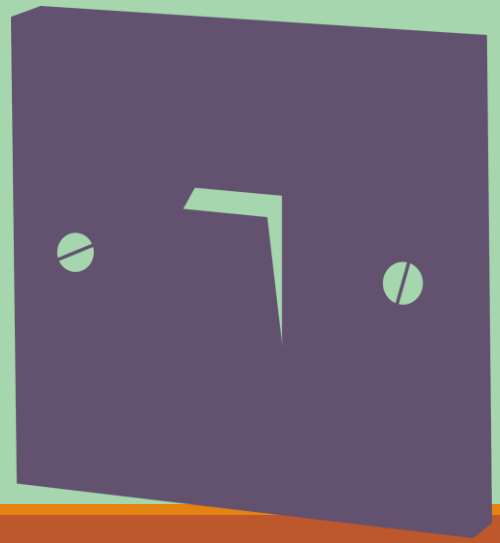
Save money on your bills by saving energy where you can

The Energy Price Cap

- On the 1st January 2019 a big change came to gas and electricity charges in Great Britain – the **energy (twice yearly) price cap wa**s established by Ofgem, the energy regulator.
- The cap was set to ensure energy prices are fair, in line with changes to the underlying costs of providing the gas and electricity that heats and powers our homes, rather than supplier profiteering. It sets a maximum amount that suppliers are permitted to charge per kWh (unit rate) of gas & electricity. This also incorporate a maximum daily standing charge which is the cost of actually getting the power to your home.
- Ofgems last price cap announced on the 6th August 2021 took effect in October 2021. As an increase in wholesale energy costs globally saw energy costs rise by £139 for people on standard (variable) tariffs. The new cap iwas set at **£1277 per year**. The price cap for prepayment tariffs also increasing by £153, to £1,309 per year.
- Around 15 million customers in England, Scotland and Wales on 'default' tariffs – such as standard variable tariffs are benefitting from this as suppliers have had to cut the costs of their default tariff, whilst having increased the prices of their new fixed term tariffs.

Fuel Poverty

“Low income households that cannot afford to heat their homes and meet their other energy needs”



What is fuel poverty?

- **Different approaches to measuring fuel poverty in England and Wales**
- **New low income/low energy efficiency (LILEE) definition about to be introduced in England**
- **Will replace the low income/high fuel costs (LIHC) definition**

England: A household is in fuel poverty if:

The energy performance certificate (EPC) rating of their property is less than EPC Band C AND

Their net disposable income after housing costs is below the poverty line

Wales: A household is in fuel poverty if:

They have to spend more than 10% of their disposable income (before housing costs) on maintaining a satisfactory heating regime and meet their other energy needs

Note: definition is based on required fuel expenditure NOT actual fuel expenditure

According to NEA (National Energy Action) charity over 4 million household were in fuel poverty in 2021. The UK has 28.1 million households

Causes of fuel poverty

- **Income- LOW INCOME**
- **Costs- HIGH ENERGY BILLS**
- **Homes- ENERGY INEFFICIENCY**
- **Appliances/usage- ENERGY INEFFICIENCY**

Fuel poverty is caused by a combination of high energy costs and low incomes coupled with people living in older properties which have insufficient insulation and inefficient heating systems.

Low income

- The low income threshold is usually adjusted for household size (just as benefit rates are meant to reflect the fact that larger households need a higher income than smaller households)
- Rough rule of thumb: household with disposable income of less than £1500 per month

Household composition	Annual income after housing costs	Monthly income
1 Adult	£9,300	£775
and 1 child	£12,200	£1,017
and 2 children	£15,000	£1,250
and 3 children	£18,000	£1,500
and 4+ children	£21,000	£1,750
2 Adults	£15,200	£1,267
and 1 child	£18,200	£1,517
and 2 children	£21,100	£1,758
and 3 children	£24,100	£2,008
and 4+ children	£26,800	£2,233

Causes- high bills

The average family energy bill in the UK is roughly £110 per month.

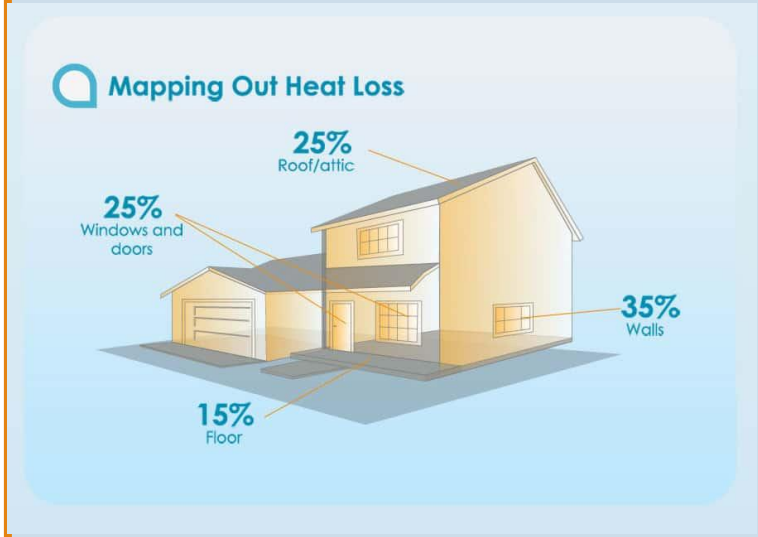
Many households either pay more to stay warm or cut back to save costs and go cold as a result.

Causes of either high fuel bills or rationing of fuel use include:

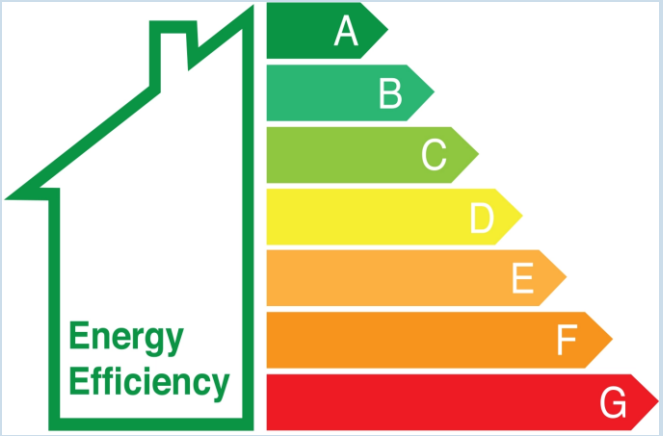
- Paying an expensive fuel tariff
- Living in a home with poor energy efficiency, e.g. built with solid walls
- Living in a home off the gas network
- Not using energy efficiently in the home
- Arrears are included in fuel bills

Causes- poor energy efficiency

Heat wasted from poorly insulated homes.



Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) measure the energy efficiency standard of homes.



Homes rated F or G are considered dangerously cold and a risk to health.

Causes- cold homes

Expensive energy bills

- Households have to make tough decisions about where to spend their income
- Heat or eat choices
- ‘Spatial shrink’ - households turn heating off in some rooms, sometimes to one room only
- Stress and anxiety about unaffordable fuel bills
- Social isolation - less willing to invite friends and family to home

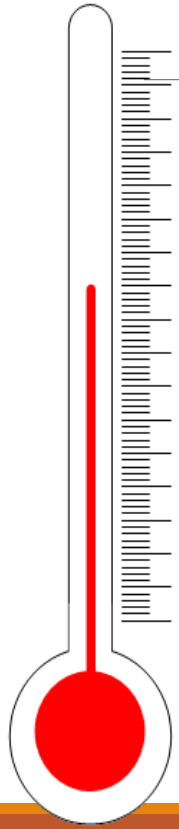
Poorly heated rooms

- Condensation on cold surfaces
- Leads to damp which will cause wallpaper and paint to peel
- Rapid growth of black mould in damp environments

Black mould spores are bad for health

- Respiratory complications
- Evidence of link with chronic fatigue syndrome

Adequate warmth



- You can't avoid/escape fuel poverty by switching off all your appliances and heating system in order to reduce your fuel bills.
- You need to ensure your home can provide you with an "adequate level of warmth".

18-21 ℃ *is an adequate level of warmth*

for healthy adults in living rooms where we are less active

- When providing advice for heating levels around the home, we focus on the "living space" - the places in our home where we spend much of our time and are least active.
  - If we're walking up/down the stairs, we generate our own body heat.
  - If we're cooking in the kitchen, we benefit from the heat from the oven or hobs.
  - If we've got a decent duvet, we can trap heat in our beds.

Health and cold homes

Source: Public Health England & NHS England, Cold Weather Plan, 2017

Temperature	Effect
18^{o}C	Minimal risk to healthy person Vulnerable households may need higher temperatures
Under 18^{o}C	May increase blood pressure & risk of cardiovascular disease
Under 16^{o}C	May diminish resistance to respiratory diseases
4-8^{o}C	Outdoor temperature threshold for risk of death
5^{o}C	High risk of hypothermia

Health and cold homes

Impact of cold homes

- The body burns excessive levels of calories to keep itself warm
- Healthy people more likely to develop health conditions and worsen existing conditions
- Reduced immunity to viruses

Health conditions closely associated with cold homes

- Cardiovascular illness, e.g. coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension
- Respiratory illness, e.g. seasonal flu, COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), asthma
- Poor mental health
- Increased risk of falls

Excess winter deaths

- 30% of excess winter deaths (the difference between winter & summer deaths) are due to cold homes
- On average about 10,000 people every year die because of cold homes
- Vast majority occur in the over 75s
- Three main causes of these deaths are cardiovascular, respiratory & dementia

Vulnerable groups

Vulnerable people are those who aren't capable of generating enough body heat, and require their living space to provide them with additional comfort.

- People with poor mobility might struggle to generate body heat due to lack of movement, they require their living space to be warm enough to provide the additional warmth needed.

The elderly take longer to warm up, and are more likely to feel the cold. This means they need to turn the thermostat up higher than a healthy person to stay well. But...

- At **24℃** dehydration can set in. It can cause forgetfulness and clumsiness. People have been misdiagnosed with dementia because their heating is too set too high.
- Advice around energy use and energy efficiency is vital for health.

Cold homes are also linked to reduced cognitive ability:

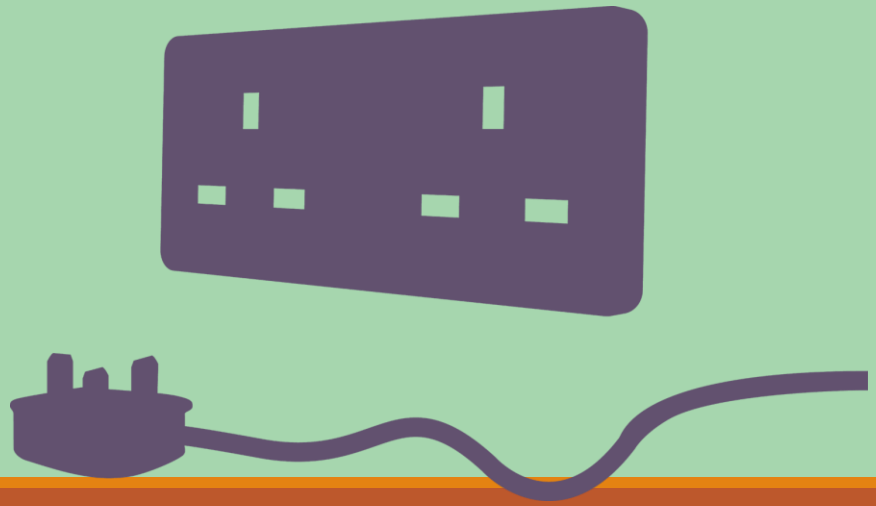
- Children may find they struggle to complete homework
- Older people are more likely to suffer trips and falls
- People recently discharged from hospital may suffer relapse

Spotting the signs of fuel poverty

- Is the home feeling cold/draughty?
- Are they using single point heaters/no central heating?
- Is there mould on the walls/peeling wallpaper?
- Is there dust on radiators or heating elements- indicating non use?
- Do they have water?
- Are blankets and/or outdoor coats used inside to keep warm?
- Are fuel bills too high so usage is self restricted/rationed?
- Is money owed to energy supplier?
- Is there self disconnection?

Providing advice

Identifying people's issues and helping energy consumers to save money and keep their homes warmer



Switching while in debt to a supplier

If you use a prepayment meter:

- If you owe less than £500 for each fuel you can still switch
- Your debt will transfer with you

If you don't have a prepayment meter:

- A supplier can **stop** you switching until you've paid off your debt
- Ensure the debt is based on an ACTUAL not ESTIMATED meter reading
- With estimated bills, it's possible that energy debts can accrue without knowledge via a credit meter
- We can help negotiate payments and switch when the accounts are cleared

Disconnection

Energy suppliers generally no longer disconnect their customers

- However, they have the right to force their way into a home via a warrant to swap a consumer's credit meter with a prepayment meter
- A prepayment meter won't provide energy without immediate payment
- Suppliers regard such action as protecting their financial interests

Prepayment meter consumers

- When consumers cannot afford to feed their meter, they are said to "self-disconnect"
- Depending on a customer's circumstances, and who their supplier is, it may be possible to apply for a grant to clear the debt
- Seek advice in such situations

Warm Home Discount (WHD)

This is a scheme delivered by all electricity suppliers with more than 150,000 customers.

It is a £140 one off credit towards energy costs (usually on your electric bill) if you're either:

- In the **'Core Group'** are customers who are in receipt of the Guarantee Credit element of Pension Credit.
- Each year the Department for Work and Pensions identifies these customers, and their supplier credits their account with £140.
- In the **'Broader Group'** are customers who are in receipt of other benefits, or are otherwise on a low income. These customers do not get the discount automatically and have to apply

Remember each supplier sets its own 'Broader Group' eligibility criteria.

Only companies with more than 250,000 customers are required to deliver the discount to 'broader group' consumers.

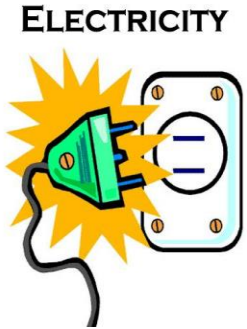
Warm Home Discount

Applications for the broader group tend to open around September each year and are run on a first-come, first-served basis.

Funds are usually exhausted by Christmas. If successful, the credit is applied to the electricity account before the end of March.

- If you received the discount last year and apply this year, you will receive it.
- If oversubscribed all other applicants go into a draw and will be advised later if they are successful.
- Utilita works slightly differently: the past two years they have opened their applications for a single week in August.

Priority Services Registers (PSR)



- **Most utility companies offer a priority register for their older or more vulnerable customers. There is normally no extra charge for these services and means that if there is any urgent issues within their home they are dealt with quickly.**

- **You are not automatically enrolled on these registers so it is always best to speak with your suppliers directly to check their schemes and to register with them.**

Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

- Gives grants for efficient boilers and wall and cavity 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 some local authorities have set up with fuel companies.

Green Homes Grants (GHG)

Grants (vouchers) for insulation and low carbon heating (only England)

- **General scheme:**
  - All owner occupiers
  - Private rented sector landlords
  - Social housing landlords
  - Park home owners
  - Voucher will cover up to ⅔ of cost of measures - up to £5,000

- **Low income scheme:**
  - Owner occupiers only
  - In receipt of certain means-tested benefits
  - Voucher will cover full cost of measures - up to £10,000

Simple Energy Advice (SEA) is the main source of information on Green Home Grants

GHG Measures

Primary	Secondary*
Loft/roof insulation	Upgrading to energy efficient doors
Solid wall insulation	Double/triple glazing where replacing single glazing
Cavity wall insulation	Secondary glazing
Insulation on a park home	Draught proofing
Under-floor Insulation	Hot water tank insulation
Heat pumps	Heating controls
Solar Thermal heating	* Can only claim if installed alongside a primary measure. Funding for a secondary measure can only be up to the same value as primary measure (within total grant)
Biomass boilers	

Financial Support

Winter Fuel Payment

This is a tax-free benefit to help pay for heating during the winter months. You could be eligible if you reached the qualifying age and normally live in Great Britain.

The qualifying week for winter 2021 to 2022 was in September 2021. These payments are usually between £100 and £300 and are paid in November and December.

Once you are registered and accepted on this scheme you will not have to apply again, and payments will be made automatically in subsequent years.

Additional Financial Support

Cold Weather Payment

This automatic payment, presently of £25 is paid when the temperature drops to 0 Celsius or below for 7 consecutive days. It is currently paid to people in receipt of pension credit or any income related benefit.

Additional Financial Support

CitA PPM

Pre-Payment Meter customers who are struggling to top up their electricity and/or gas meters can get an energy voucher. They can get £49 until March 31st and £30 from 1st April – 31st October, regardless of household size. It is thought that these amounts will cover about 10 days' worth of energy. These vouchers are available until the end of June 2022. Clients can get up to three by the end of June.

Client Criteria

Fuel vouchers can be issued to clients who:

- Use a pre-payment meter for their gas and/or electricity
- Are struggling to pay for their gas and/or electricity
- Have been affected by the energy price rises , and*
- Are at risk of self-disconnection

Additional Financial Support

Household Support Fund: Southwark Council Energy Support Scheme (SCESS)

This is a time-limited fund where **Southwark** households could get £65 to help towards their energy bills.

Customers must be **Southwark residents on low incomes with responsibility for energy bills who meet at least one of the following criteria**:

- Working, not eligible for benefits
- Not working, not eligible for benefits
- Large home with 3+ bedrooms
- Low energy efficiency home
- 75 years or older
- Pension age with health or disability issues

Each Southwark household is entitled to one payment

What can front line workers do?

- Be more aware of the cold home issues and fuel poverty causes
- Reassure your clients there is help available
- Encourage annual energy “MOT”s to ensure income is maximized and energy bills are as low as possible
- Refer and encourage vulnerable clients to ask us for energy advice and energy efficiency information, to reduce the risk of health problems associated with cold homes

Thank you

Andrea Bedward

Mobile: 07470 875444

citizens advice Southwark