



**CENTRE FOR
SUSTAINABLE
ENERGY**

Energy
Efficiency
Partnership
for Homes

INTEGRATING WELFARE RIGHTS AND FUEL POVERTY SERVICES

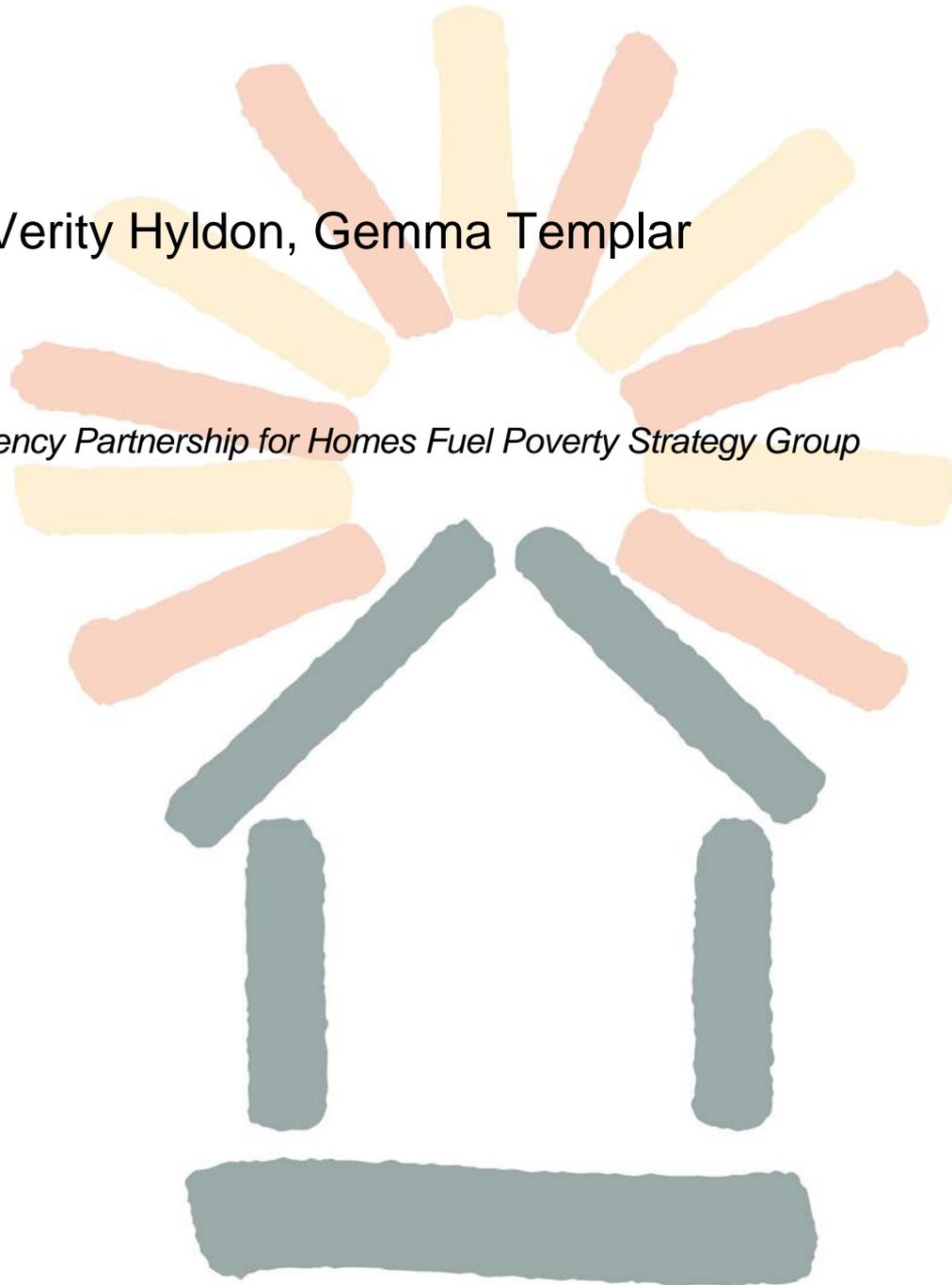
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Report to Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy Group

6 April 2006

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Acknowledgements

CSE would like to thank all those who participated in the interviews and workshop for their time and valuable contributions. Any misinterpretation of information presented in this report is the fault of CSE and not participants.

CSE would also like to thank the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Home's Fuel Poverty Strategy Group for providing financial support to this project and Ofgem for hosting the workshop.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CSE was commissioned by the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy Group to carry out research into the integration of welfare rights advice and fuel poverty services and propose options for improvement. The project builds upon research carried out by NEA's 'Maximising income' research. This report outlines the results of CSE's research. It is aimed at people working in both the energy efficiency (EE) and income maximisation (IM) advice sectors.

The research programme consisted of a review of the IM and EE advice sectors, interviews with people working in the two sectors at both the operational and policy levels, the production of eight case studies of exemplar integrated schemes and the running of a workshop to develop policy options.

The research found that many stakeholders consider income maximisation should play a greater role in combating fuel poverty than is currently the case. Both IM and EE advice sector workers are willing to forge closer links, so that they can jointly combat fuel poverty more effectively. However, it is not likely that joint working will happen without external intervention and resources. Local authorities, Warm Zones and the Pension Service can play an important role in this respect.

There are opportunities for the two advice sectors to learn from practice in each other's sector, for example the importance of providing advice face to face, the value of following up clients, the use of client monitoring for policy and development purposes and the value of gathering all client information in one stage.

Integration at the local level requires awareness training, partnership working, cross referral systems, coordination and funding. Integration does not imply IM and EE advisers becoming specialists in each other's subjects. However, a key message from the research was that when clients seek any sort of advice, every effort should be made to ensure they receive as full a range of advice as possible.

Many IM advice providers already aim to provide a 'complete advice package'. However, the research suggests that advice on energy efficiency grants is given a low priority.

Most IM advice is provided face to face, either in advice centres or in people's homes. This method of delivery is more suitable for vulnerable households and clients needing to make complex disability claims. There has been a growth in telephone-based IM advice, although most providers have a facility to provide face to face advice, where appropriate. The exception is Eaga's Benefit Entitlement Check (BEC) service, which, although advising clients to contact local advice centres where necessary, does not have a formal arrangement with local centres to take referrals (Eaga has offered to review this situation).

The Eaga BEC service represents a national example of integration and has helped increase the overall supply of benefits advice. It has developed an innovative referral system with the Pension Service, with respect to claims for Pension Credit and Warm Front grants, that reduces the need for older clients to apply to separate agencies.

Successful, local integrated schemes have recognised the need to fund IM advice to meet the additional demand created by schemes. Most local IM advice providers are already over-stretched and need further resources to provide additional capacity.

The EE advice sector has only limited capacity to provide advice face to face and instead relies mainly on telephone-based delivery. Energy Efficiency Advice Centres (EEACs)

would like to provide more face to face advice and advice in people's homes. They would also like to follow up clients to establish whether they have acted upon the advice.

EEAC monitoring and follow-up should improve with the move to Sustainable Energy Networks (SENs). However, the Energy Saving Trust's priority for SENs on carbon saving will lead to an emphasis on the 'able to pay' sector, rather than the 'fuel poor'. A greater emphasis on fuel poverty may encourage more extensive use of face to face advice, monitoring of referrals onto grant schemes and a stronger focus on seeking partnerships with IM advice providers.

The report concludes with a series of recommendations. These include:

1. All advice services, both IM and EE, should have a facility to provide face to face advice so that they are able to reach households in greatest need of advice.
2. The new Sustainable Energy Networks (and existing EEACs) should be set an explicit objective of combating fuel poverty and advising low income households, as well as reducing carbon emissions in the domestic sector. This requires:
 - The introduction of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for 'number of low income households advised' and 'customers advised face to face'.
 - Increased funding for face to face advice and home visits.
 - Monitoring of 'clients referred onto 100% grant schemes', i.e. this is monitored separately to 'clients referred onto discount schemes'.
 - Working with Eaga to monitor EEAC-generated grant referrals. All EEACs/SENs should use Eaga's portal system to facilitate this.
3. Integrated advice requires advice workers to acquire a basic awareness of issues in each other's sector and knowledge of where to refer clients. It also requires providing clients with a full advice package, capturing all required information in one stage, minimising the need for repeated applications and supporting clients throughout the claims process. This requires reform of benefit administration systems, as well as advice structures.
4. All local authorities should be required to produce affordable warmth strategies, as in Scotland, of which coordination of advice should form an important element. Local authority customer management systems should make integrated advice a central feature of the new systems.
5. The Government and Devolved Administrations should place a higher priority on income maximisation within the Fuel Poverty Strategy, in recognition of the high impact it has on reducing fuel poverty. This entails:
 - Providing BECs to all Warm Front claimants
 - Providing BECs to Warm Home Scheme and Warm Deal claimants
 - Ensuring that BEC services have access to funded face to face advice
 - Increased funding for local IM advice providers (tied to a requirement to integrate with local energy advice provision)
 - Funding local agencies, such as local authorities or Warm Zones, to coordinate the two advice sectors
 - Job Centres Plus and the Inland Revenue setting up similar cross referral systems with Eaga as currently exists with the Pension Service
 - Job Centres Plus giving a higher priority to benefit take-up, both for 'pre-work' and 'in-work'/'about to start work' clients.

1 CONTEXT

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) was commissioned by the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy Group to carry out research into the integration of welfare rights advice and fuel poverty services and propose options for improvement. The project builds upon research carried out by National Energy Action (NEA) in 2004, 'Maximising income' (NEA, 2005). This report outlines the results of CSE's research. It is aimed at people working in both the energy efficiency and income maximisation sectors. The report includes a glossary of terms for those not familiar with any of the terminology used.

Fuel poverty policy has traditionally tended to focus on energy efficiency measures, since poor insulation standards and inadequate heating systems are major contributory causes of fuel poverty. However, there is growing recognition that the non take-up of benefits is also an important contributory cause. Up to one third of eligible households in the UK do not claim the benefits to which they are entitled (DWP, 2004). The problem is particularly severe among pensioner households, who also form the largest single group of fuel poor households (DTI & DEFRA, 2005).

Failure to claim means-tested benefits exacerbates fuel poverty in two ways:

1. It prevents fuel poor households from accessing free energy efficiency grants and therefore benefiting from homes that are cheaper to heat.
2. It exacerbates household income poverty: a key contributory cause of fuel poverty (alongside poor energy efficiency and high fuel prices)¹.

It is therefore important that benefits advice forms an integral part of fuel poverty policy.

1.1 Non-eligibility for Warm Front

Partial evidence of the impact of non take-up of benefits on fuel poverty levels was provided by Warm Zones, the National Audit Office and others (NEA/CSE, 2005; NAO, 2003). The NAO, for example, reported that up to one third of fuel poor households in the private sector was not eligible for Warm Front because they did not claim the required passport benefits (NAO, 2003). However, there are two possible causes of non eligibility for Warm Front²:

1. Fuel poor households are not claiming the benefits to which they are entitled and are therefore ineligible for Warm Front. By claiming these benefits, households will become eligible for Warm Front.
2. Fuel poor households may not be eligible for passport benefits because under-occupation and/or very energy inefficient housing are the principle causes of their fuel poverty. Their incomes are still likely to be modest but too low to afford their high heating costs and too high to come within the thresholds that trigger entitlement to benefits.

¹ Many benefits advice projects report the average increased income resulting from successful claims at £30pw or over £1500pa, although this will vary significantly between individual clients (Sefton, 2006).

² A similar situation is likely to apply to HEES programme in Wales, Warm Deal in Scotland and Warm Homes Scheme (WHS) in Northern Ireland, priority Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) schemes in England, Scotland and Wales and the Energy Efficiency Levy in Northern Ireland (see glossary for further details of schemes), although the extent of the problem is not known for these schemes. It is not applicable to the Central Heating Initiative in Scotland because this is not means-tested.

The relative contribution of these two factors towards the problem of Warm Front ineligibility is not clear. The Warm Zones evaluation, using evidence from Stockton Warm Zone, reported that 55% of Warm Front ineligible 'fuel poor' households were pensioner households and 43% were single pensioner households. Furthermore, 89% of ineligible 'fuel poor' pensioner households were estimated to be eligible for Pension Credit, a passport benefit for Warm Front (CSE/NEA, 2005).

This would suggest that the first factor above is the principle cause of Warm Front ineligibility. However, the CSE/NEA research had to make a number of assumptions in calculating its figures. For example, Warm Zones did not collect information on householders' savings which is an important factor in determining eligibility for Pension Credit. This is likely to mean that the above calculations are an over-estimate. The assessment of 'fuel poverty' is also based on Stockton Warm Zone's own estimate which is only an approximate measure. This is because Warm Zones were not able to collect the level of detailed information required for an accurate assessment of fuel poverty (CSE/NEA, 2006).

Research by CSE for Eaga Partnership Charitable Trust found that take-up of Warm Front in rural areas for the period up to 2003 was much lower (2%) than take-up in urban areas (4.4%), despite the fact that fuel poverty levels are slightly higher in rural areas than urban (CSE, 2006). The study suggested that non take-up of benefits may provide part of the explanation, since under-claiming is a particular problem in rural areas (Naji & Griffiths, 1999). However, the study concluded that the main contributory cause of high fuel poverty levels in rural areas related to the extensive problem of 'hard to treat' properties³. This pushes many more households into fuel poverty than might have been expected, given income levels in rural areas. The study concluded that the use of passport benefits as a means of accessing Warm Front grants (and thus reduce fuel poverty) was problematic in rural areas.

Despite the lack of precision about the extent to which benefits take-up advice can address the problem of fuel poor households ineligible for Warm Front/HEES/Warm Deal/WHS, it is undoubtedly the case that it can make a valuable contribution. It is therefore important that welfare rights and other income maximisation advice⁴ forms a central element of fuel poverty policy, alongside the provision of energy efficiency advice, installation of energy efficiency measures and measures to reduce fuel prices.

The need to take every measure possible to reduce fuel poverty becomes even greater given recent fuel price rises. The Government's Energy Review estimates that fuel poverty among vulnerable households in England doubled from 1m households in 2003 to 2m in mid 2006 (DTI, 2006). The Review goes on to ask "what further steps should be taken towards meeting the government's goals for ensuring that every home is adequately and affordably heated?" (ibid). Making sure that fuel poor and low income households get their full entitlement to benefits clearly represents one possible step.

³ Properties built with solid walls and/or off the gas network.

⁴ For example, advice on debt, financial management, housing, fuel tariffs, housing and independent living.

1.2 The income maximisation and energy efficiency advice sectors

The main providers of income maximisation advice in this country are the Citizens Advice Bureau (CABx), with Age Concern, local authority welfare rights units and the Disability Alliance network also being important sources (among many others). More recently, Eaga and the Pension Service have become important providers of benefits advice. Eaga provides Benefit Entitlement Checks (BEC) as part of its management of the Government and Devolved Administrations' energy efficiency grant programmes, namely Warm Front in England, Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) in Wales and the Central Heating Initiative (CHI) in Scotland⁵. Eaga also provides a BEC service for four of the six major fuel suppliers in Britain (the other two major suppliers provide an in-house BEC service).

The main providers of energy efficiency advice in the UK are the Energy Saving Trust's (EST) local Energy Efficiency Advice Centres (EEACs), with fuel company advice centres also being important sources. Energy efficiency advice providers can help encourage take-up of energy efficiency measures by informing low income clients of their rights to free grants for energy efficiency measures if they are in receipt of certain means-tested benefits or tax credits. Means-tested grants are available from the Government, Devolved Administrations, fuel company priority Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) schemes and, in some areas, local authority private sector renewal programmes. By helping make sure people get their full entitlement to benefits, energy efficiency advice providers can also help maximise take-up of means-tested grants for which benefits act as a 'passport'.

While BECs now form an important element of fuel poverty programmes at the national level, the main providers of energy efficiency and income maximisation advice at the local level have historically worked in isolation of each other. There are good practice examples of more integrated approaches. However, these tend to be the exception, rather than the rule. The main aim of this study, therefore, was to propose options for improving integration. CSE has carried out a substantial research programme to achieve this aim. The research methodology is described below.

1.3 Research methodology

The CSE research programme consisted of the following elements:

1. A review of the income maximisation and energy efficiency advice sectors across the UK.
2. The identification of practical barriers to, and opportunities for, integration through conducting semi-structured 'operational interviews' with ten practitioners in the two advice sectors (a copy of the interview schedule is included in Appendix 1).
3. The identification of key policy issues through conducting semi-structured 'strategic interviews' with thirteen key stakeholders concerned with income maximisation and energy efficiency advice services (a copy of the interview schedule is included in Appendix 1), plus more focused interviews around particular issues with a further six stakeholders.

⁵ BECs are not offered as part of the Warm Homes Scheme in Northern Ireland or the Warm Deal in Scotland.

4. The production of eight case studies of exemplar integrated income maximisation and energy efficiency advice schemes. These can be read as 'stand alone' case studies and are included in Appendix 5.
5. Running a workshop for policy makers and practitioners working in the two advice sectors on how best to improve integration between the two sectors (the notes of the workshop are included as Appendix 4).
6. An analysis of the interview findings, case studies and workshop outcomes to help meet the overall research aims (Appendices 2 and 3 give a summary of the interview results).

This report represents the final stage of the project. It summarises the results of the research programme and provides a series of recommendations for improving integration. It is intended to disseminate this report widely to policy makers and practitioners in the energy efficiency, fuel poverty and income maximisation advice fields to help make sure that the report's proposals are implemented. Further copies of the report can be downloaded at www.eeph.org.uk

1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the energy efficiency and income maximisation advice sectors, against a set of standard measures, and concludes with a comparison of practice in the two sectors.

Chapter 3 presents the results of the strategic and operational interviews and workshop outcomes and summarises their implications for integration.

Chapter 4 summarises the case studies of integrated schemes and draws out their implications for good practice.

Chapter 5 draws together the different research elements into a final conclusion and makes recommendations for future policy.

2 REVIEW OF ADVICE SECTORS

ENERGY EFFICIENCY ADVICE

2.1 Providers

The two main providers of energy efficiency advice in the UK are the Energy Saving Trust's (EST) Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC) network and fuel companies' energy efficiency advice services. There are currently 48 EEACs in the UK. Core funding is provided by the EST and local authorities, although many EEACs (or the organisations that run them) raise additional funding from a wide variety of sources to run specific projects. Fuel suppliers are obliged to provide a free energy efficiency advice service as part of their licence conditions. Suppliers use the service to encourage take-up of EEC schemes, help people with problems paying their fuel bills reduce their energy consumption and encourage consumers to reduce their energy use through behavioural change and/or investment in energy efficiency measures.

Eaga provides energy efficiency advice to Warm Front, HEES, CHI, Warm Deal and Warm Home Scheme (WHS) recipients. This is provided by surveyors at the point of assessing measures required in clients' homes. Installers also are expected provide clients with guidance and operating instructions on use of heating and/or insulation measures installed through the grant programmes.

Energywatch provides energy advice in the form of a telephone advice line. Advice focuses on consumer complaints with energy suppliers, how to switch supplier and/or payment method and promotion of suppliers' Priority Services Registers (see glossary), rather than energy efficiency. Energywatch signposts consumers that require energy efficiency advice to fuel suppliers' advice lines or the EEAC network.

Advice on payment methods and switching fuel supplier can be regarded as a form of income maximisation in that it can bring about significant savings in fuel bills. It can therefore also make a contribution towards reducing fuel poverty, although low income consumers in arrears cannot switch suppliers and there are few competitive offers for consumers who pay by prepayment meter (Klein, 2003; Baker, 2001). This report has focussed on energy efficiency advice, although it does highlight schemes that offer tariff advice as part of a 'total advice package'.

2.2 Method of delivery

Energy efficiency advice is predominantly provided over the telephone by fuel suppliers. Fuel suppliers follow up 42% of enquiries with written home energy reports (New Perspectives, 2003). A limited amount of face to face advice is provided to Priority Service Register consumers through home visits. EEACs also predominantly provide advice over the telephone (use of a national number directs callers to their nearest EEAC). Most clients are also provided with tailored written advice, following self completion of a Home Energy Check (HEC) questionnaire. EEACs provide a limited amount of face to face advice through home visits, presentations and attendance at events.

Eaga generally provides advice to people in their homes, since this is one of the functions of Eaga's surveyors. This is backed up with a leaflet on simple energy saving tips. Advice will

tend not to be as detailed as that provided by EEACs through the HEC process. However, it does have the advantage of being delivered in clients' homes. It is also based on surveyors' assessments of clients' property characteristics, rather than the clients' own assessment that is central to the EEAC system.

It is important to note that all fuel companies, EEACs and Eaga will advise on behavioural change, e.g. turning down thermostats, turning lights and water thermostats off, closing curtains etc, as well as installing measures. Energy audits by contrast focus on physical measures alone. Nevertheless, these may become an increasingly important source of advice with the introduction of the home sellers' packs and the possible development of energy service companies (see section 2.5 below).

2.3 Informing policy development

Energy efficiency advice providers do not have a formal systematic process for using the advice process to inform policy development. For example, clients will often contact advice providers to report such problems as malfunctioning heating systems, heating controls that are difficult to understand or operational difficulties with the delivery of grant-aided work (e.g. delays, mess, poor quality work, failure to keep to appointments).

The EEAC network does not have any formal system for logging issues encountered for central collation and possible use in lobbying and advocacy. EEACs will often use more informal mechanisms to raise issues, such as occasional meetings with Eaga, suppliers or local authorities. Evidence presented will tend to be anecdotal, rather than based on any systematic interrogation of client records.

Of course, managing agents, local authorities and suppliers all have their own quality assurance procedures for ensuring problems are kept to a minimum. Managing agents will also have procedures for raising policy issues arising from clients' experience, for example, the extent to which Warm Front or HEES jobs may exceed grant maxima. However, this is separate to the use of advice clients' evidence as a basis for informing policy. It is important to note that the EEAC network does not have a formal remit from the EST (or its principal funder, Defra) to carry out such a function, nor are there systems in place to facilitate this.

2.4 Monitoring and follow-up

EEACs

EEACs log all completed HEC forms on a central database called SENSE which is held at EST. Every EEAC has access to the database which they can use for their own monitoring purposes. EST uses the database for a wide variety of purposes, for example, monitoring service standards, evaluating the effectiveness of advice, determining the characteristics of particular customer segments. The EST also regularly carries out 'mystery shopper surveys' on individual EEACs to assess such issues as the accuracy of advice and customer care.

EEACs advise on average 600,000 clients per year, of which around 500,000 will have received HEC forms (the former figure includes verbal advice) (information provided by EST).

The EST does not systematically analyse data from the SENSE database to establish the number of clients referred to schemes aimed at low income households (e.g. Warm Front, HEES, CHI, Warm Deal, WHS, priority EEC), although this data is collected.

It is possible to obtain some information from Eaga about EEAC-generated Warm Front referrals, for those EEACs registered to use Eaga's new computer portal system. 21 EEACs are currently registered to make on-line referrals through the system, although only 11 have used it to date (the remainder are likely to have only recently registered). Eaga received 1,270 EEAC Warm Front referrals through the portal system in 2005/6, although it expects this number to increase significantly as EEACs (and others) become more familiar with the system. Eaga estimates it receives about 12,000 referrals per year from a variety of agents outwith the portal system, of which it estimates a significant number come from EEACs (information provided verbally by Eaga).

The EST does not collate data on clients' income levels or dependence on means-tested benefits. EEACs do not collect income data, although they do collect data on clients claiming means-tested benefits since this enables advisers to inform clients of possible entitlement to means-tested grants (although not all clients will provide this information).

Part of the reason for the lack of emphasis on monitoring benefits or means-tested grant data is that 'affordable warmth' is not a core EEAC objective set by the EST, whereas 'carbon saving' is⁶. This leads to an emphasis on more affluent households since this sector provides the greatest potential for carbon savings (low income households tend to place more emphasis on 'comfort improvements' than energy saving). By contrast, local funders will often emphasise fuel poverty objectives and will sometimes ask EEACs to collect monitoring information relevant to fuel poverty.

EEACs are currently not funded by EST to systematically follow up clients to establish whether they have acted upon the advice given, although local authority funders or specific projects may require a certain amount of client follow-up. The EST does, however, carry out a national 'savings study', using a random sample of 2000 clients. The survey follows up clients advised to assess the impact of advice on behavioural change and measures installed. The survey results form part of the overall evaluation of the EEAC programme.

Fuel suppliers

All suppliers provide Ofgem with monthly reports on the energy efficiency advice provided. This includes information on numbers advised, nature of advice provided, referrals to EEC schemes. Ofgem regularly carries out mystery shopping exercises to monitor the quality and accuracy of advice given. Some suppliers also carry out their own mystery shopping exercises, as well as maintain internal quality assurance procedures.

Suppliers provided energy efficiency advice to 215,500 customers in 2005 (Ofgem, 2006). This included provision of advice to 143,000 customers in debt and 24,000 Priority Service Register customers. 16,000 customers were referred to Warm Front and EEC contacts. This information is collected as part of Ofgem's monitoring of its Social Action Plan. Unlike EST, Ofgem does therefore collect some monitoring information that is relevant to fuel poverty objectives.

⁶ However, a number of the organisations that run EEACs do have 'affordable warmth' as a core objective and have developed initiatives alongside their EEAC to assist this.

Suppliers are not required to follow up clients advised to establish whether they have acted upon the advice given, although some suppliers may do this for their own purposes. This information is not generally made public. Suppliers have suggested that they would be prepared to carry out more monitoring and follow-up work if they received credit for providing advice as part of their EEC commitment.

2.5 New developments

Sustainable Energy Networks (SEN)

The EST is currently planning to re-organise the EEAC network towards a more regional structure. Regional centres will be responsible for developing strategic priorities and partnership building, supported by local centres responsible for delivery. It is likely that the regional centres will be responsible for the telephone advice service. The approach is currently being piloted in three areas.

The new structure aims to increase the provision of advice substantially and will be driven by carbon reduction targets. It will therefore place a greater emphasis on the 'able to pay' sector, following the argument that this is where the greatest carbon savings are to be made. However, it will put more emphasis on customer follow-up and monitoring outcomes (e.g. homes insulated), rather than outputs (e.g. HECs completed). For example, the pilot SENs are tracking referrals to grant (e.g. Warm Front) and discount schemes (e.g. non-priority EEC) and are monitoring clients receiving follow-up advice to establish whether they acted upon the advice.

Home Information Packs

From 2007, all private properties that are put on the market for sale will have to come with a Home Information Pack (or 'Sellers Pack'), which will include a mandatory Home Condition Report (HCR). This will include an energy efficiency assessment of the property (the 'energy audit') that will detail cost effective measures to improve its energy performance. Given that there are 1.4m property transactions in the UK every year, the HCR potentially represents an important source of energy efficiency advice.

Pilot Energy Service Companies (escos)

The '28 day rule', in which fuel consumers only have to give 28 days notice of their intention to switch supplier, has been relaxed in a pilot project that is intended to encourage fuel suppliers to set up esco arrangements with consumers (the provision of both fuel supply and energy saving measures as one package). By allowing suppliers to provide longer term contracts, it is hoped that suppliers will be more incentivised to invest in energy efficiency measures in consumers' homes. This is because there will be greater certainty over the length of time they can recoup the cost of that investment.

Suppliers are required to carry out an energy audit of the homes of customers that agree to the new contracts. This therefore potentially represents a new form of energy efficiency advice for householders (although, to date, few suppliers have developed and marketed strong 'esco' offerings).

2.6 Implications of initiatives for fuel poverty and income maximisation

All of the above initiatives have more implications for the 'able to pay' sector than fuel poor households. Nevertheless, there are still some possible improvements for the 'fuel poverty sector'.

The move to SENs could enable better monitoring of households referred to 100% grant schemes than exists with the current EEAC network. The North East SEN, for example, has developed partnerships with Warm Zones and CABx to make sure that benefit take-up is maximised and clients are referred back into the grant process. Clients advised that they may be entitled to benefits are asked to give prior consent for referral for grant aid if their claims are successful (to address data protection). The pilot has also carried out joint initiatives with Eaga and local authorities in which combined mailings are sent to potential Warm Front clients.

The HCR will have some implications for fuel poverty in the sense that a proportion of housing sale transactions will be carried out by fuel poor households, given that 65% of fuel poor households are owner occupiers (DTI, 2005). It is not clear whether the HCR will include information on where to get grant aid for making improvements recommended.

The energy audit component of escos is unlikely to have many implications for fuel poor and low income households. Suppliers are expected to first make sure consumers are not eligible for free grant measures before setting up energy services contracts that include payment for energy efficient measures. However, it is possible that some low income households may be able to afford the measures recommended by the audits which are not included in the standard measures packages offered under Warm Front or equivalent schemes.

INCOME MAXIMISATION ADVICE

2.7 Providers

There are a wide range of welfare rights advice providers, with even more once debt advice and housing advice are also taken into account. Examples of non profit making, independent providers⁷ include:

Age Concern England	Law Centres Federation
Citizens Advice	Money Advice Association
Disability Advice Network	Royal National Institute for the Blind
Help the Aged	Shelter

Many local authority welfare rights units also strive to provide an independent, impartial service. However, local authorities are also responsible for the administration of Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, free school meals, educational grants, care assessments and private sector renewal grants (and others). Some advice centres consider this dual role as undermining the independence of welfare rights units.

⁷ Many private solicitors also provide benefits advice.

In addition, Eaga now provides a Benefit Entitlement Check (BEC) service as part its management of the Warm Front, HEES and CHI schemes. There is a slight difference between the different schemes. BECs are provided to householders enquiring about Warm Front but not currently on a passport benefit. If householders are already on a passport benefit, they will only receive a BEC if their property cannot be brought up to SAP 65 with the energy efficiency measures available. In Wales, BECs are offered to all HEES recipients and, to a limited extent, households enquiring about HEES but not on a passport benefit. In Scotland, BECs are offered to all CHI recipients. Since the CHI initiative is not means-tested, there is no need to use the BEC service to help get people onto the scheme.

BECs are not offered as part of Warm Deal in Scotland or the Warm Homes Scheme in Northern Ireland.

Eaga also runs a BEC service for four of the six major fuel suppliers. The other two major suppliers run their own in-house BEC service. It is not a regulatory requirement that fuel suppliers provide a BEC service. However, all suppliers now do this, in part as their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility, and in part because it makes sound commercial sense. By maximising the income of customers in debt, suppliers can help reduce the amount of debt owed.

British Gas, EDF Energy and Scottish Power have also set up Charitable Trusts. These provide grants to independent advice agencies, as well as to consumers having problems paying their fuel bills. In addition, the Energy Retailers Association (ERA) recently established a 'homeheat' helpline. This is promoted to low income and fuel poor households as a single telephone number for people wanting advice on energy efficiency, benefits, payment methods and other energy issues. If the advice required is straightforward, the helpline will advise callers direct. Most callers, however, are routed to their supplier's Priority Services Team who will coordinate advice from the specialist providers, e.g. BEC, energy efficiency, etc.

The Pension Service offers an advice service to pensioners who may be eligible for Pension Credit, as does the Inland Revenue to households who may be eligible for Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit (which are also, subject to income thresholds of £15,500pa, passport benefits for Warm Front, HEES, Warm Deal and priority EEC). The Pension Service has set up an innovative arrangement with Eaga, such that, with clients' consent, the Pension Service can process claims for Pension Credit on the basis of information supplied by Eaga without clients having to re-apply. A similar arrangement exists with the homeheat helpline. The Pension Service will also automatically refer clients back to Eaga for a Warm Front grant if their Pension Credit claim is successful. This arrangement does not exist with HEES (and is not relevant to CHI).

Citizens Advice Bureaux represent by far the largest supplier of income maximisation advice, with over 3,400 outlets in the UK⁸. While benefits advice represents the largest single type of advice provided by CABx, Bureaux also provide advice on asylum, consumer issues, debt, financial management, housing and employment and others. However, CABx have traditionally not placed a high priority on providing advice on Warm Front, Warm Deal, HEES or WHS. This report has focused on the CAB service, given its dominance of the 'income maximisation advice' sector, with respect to integration at the local level.

⁸ There are around 850 'high street' bureau; however, there are also 'outreach outlets' in such locations as GP surgeries, hospitals, courts, community centres and prisons.

CABx receive 90% of their funds from the public sector, with the DTI and local authorities accounting for the bulk of this (Citizens Advice, 2004). The Legal Services Commission accounts for 19% of CAB funds, with 227 CABx contracted to provide publicly funded legal services (legal aid). Community Legal Services represent an important element of the welfare rights advice sector, since a substantial element of welfare rights advice is now integrated within the legal aid system. CABx also receive considerable 'in-kind' support through use of over 20,000 volunteers. Age Concern also has an extensive volunteer programme.

2.8 Method of delivery

CABx and most of the independent providers listed generally provide advice face to face, usually through advising clients in a local advice centre and in some cases through home visits. CABx have also developed a range of self help leaflets that can be accessed via their website. CABx do provide advice over the telephone, particularly those serving rural areas, but advisers are trained to refer clients for face to face advice, if this is considered more appropriate. Citizens Advice is currently running a pilot telephone-based advice line in Scotland.

The Money Advice Trust runs a national debt helpline which is widely used by clients with debt problems. The helpline provides income maximisation advice since this can obviously make an important contribution towards reducing debts. It also provides a self-help information pack and a wide variety of factsheets.

The Pension Service and Inland Revenue provide a telephone advice line for claiming Pension Credit and tax credits respectively. Advisers at the Pension Service are trained to recognise when clients may need face to face advice and employs 2000 home visitors to provide this.

The method of delivery and client base varies considerably between different local authority welfare rights units. Some only provide advice over the telephone and have arrangements with independent providers if clients are considered to need face to face advice, e.g. Durham CC. Some provide face to face advice, for example in local Neighbourhood Offices, e.g. Birmingham CC. Some provide a service to all members of the public, e.g. Swansea Council, while others only provide a service to Council tenants and/or Social Services clients, e.g. Sandwell Council. Some tend to focus more on general information/take-up campaigns, while providing a strategic oversight role to the independent sector, e.g. Liverpool CC.

Eaga's BEC service is telephone-based. Eaga sends a BEC questionnaire to clients which clients complete and returns to Eaga by freepost. Alternatively, Eaga can complete forms on clients' behalf. Eaga uses this information to produce a report of what benefits clients are entitled to and how to make a claim. If advisers consider clients may require face to face advice or advice on some of the more complex disability benefits, they are advised to contact their local CAB.

The independent providers listed above offer a full advocacy service, including appeals and tribunal representation. This service is not offered by the Pension Service since it would not be appropriate for Pension Service advisers to appeal against decisions made by different parts of the same organisation. Eaga advises clients who need to appeal to contact their

local CAB. Local authority welfare rights units will sometimes carry out appeals themselves (including in a few cases, appeals against the same authority's benefits administration sections) or sometimes refer to a voluntary sector provider with which they have an arrangement, e.g. Devon Care Direct.

2.9 Informing policy development

CABx have a strong, evidence-based approach to policy development. All advisers are encouraged to highlight 'social policy' issues either locally or nationally by completing a Bureau Evidence Form when they consider there are problems with local or national policy. Issues relating to benefits might include difficulties in getting through to DWP offices, obscure letters to clients, inefficiencies in processing claims, benefit take-up problems or reclaiming over-payments, to name just a few.

Citizens Advice Social Policy Department collates evidence from all bureaux and uses this for advocacy and policy development. It circulates a monthly social policy bulleting that highlights current issues. With respect to energy, Citizens Advice has played a major role in highlighting problems with the competitive energy market, for example, mis-selling, tariff differentials. However, it has not addressed issues relating to the main energy efficiency grant programmes, reflecting the low priority it has traditionally placed on take-up of these grants.

The CAB emphasis on policy development and advocacy reflects its charitable aim that 'individuals should not suffer from lack of knowledge of their rights and responsibilities'. CSE is not aware of other advice providers having the same systematic approach to building up evidence, although many will use individual case studies for advocacy purposes, e.g. Age Concern.

2.10 Monitoring and follow-up

Citizens Advice

All client information is logged on the Citizens Advice computer system, referred to as CASE. Citizens Advice uses this extensively to help identify trends, issues and strategic oversight, as well as track progress on advice provided to clients. The system is frequently used to capture the financial outcomes of advice given, e.g. results of benefit claims, amount of backdated claims, debt written off. All clients are followed up to establish the outcomes of claims. In many cases, advisers will be involved throughout the process, from help with filling in forms and chasing up claims with benefit administrators to appeals and representation at tribunals.

Citizens Advice also regularly commissions surveys of a sample of CAB clients from MORI on particular issues, e.g. debt, attitudes to call centres. Citizens Advice has detailed information, from both CASE and the MORI surveys, on the social composition of its client base, for example social class, claimants of means-tested benefits, household composition, disability, ethnicity, and tenure.

CABx deal with 5.5m enquiries a year. 1.7m relate to welfare benefits and 1.4m to debt (Ofgem, 2005). In Wales, over £17m worth of benefits was claimed by CAB clients in 2003/4 (Citizens Advice Cymru, 2005). An innovative 'Better advice: better health' project,

whereby advice is provided in GP surgeries and other health settings, has led to claims of over £10m extra benefits since 2001.

Citizens Advice is not able to provide information on the number of clients referred for means tested energy efficiency grants because this information is not recorded by CASE or investigated through the MORI surveys.

Eaga Partnership

Eaga provides 36,000 BECs per year as part of Warm Front, 4,800 per year as part of the CHI, 2,400 pa as part of HEES and 7,200 pa for the 4 utilities it works with (Ofgem, 2005a). Around 35% of completed BECs lead to new or additional benefit.

Eaga uses a 'closing the loop' team to follow up referrals and process through to Warm Front. All Warm Front clients are called back to make sure that the advice was acted upon. For HEES, CHI and fuel supplier cases, a random sample of clients are followed up. Eaga also uses an independent research organisation to carry out a 6 monthly benchmarking exercise. This contacts a random sample of clients to establish the proportion who acted upon the advice (75-80%), reasons for not acting upon advice and the proportion of completed BECs that go on to make successful claims (45%) (Ofgem, 2005a).

Fuel suppliers

Research by the Energy Services Partnership for Ofgem referred to concerns that there was insufficient follow-up of suppliers' BEC services (ESP, 2005). Ofgem has responded by proposing in its Social Action Strategy to develop best practice for BEC services, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that the benefit entitlement identified is actually taken up (which implies greater follow-up) (Ofgem, 2005b). Ofgem also reports that 3 of the 6 suppliers are considering introducing more stringent monitoring and follow-up procedures (Ofgem, 2005a).

British Gas recently contracted LSE to carry out an independent evaluation of its BEC service, which is provided by Eaga (LSE, 2006). The analysis found that just over a third of BEC recipients (22,000 cases) were found to be entitled to additional benefits, worth £11.6m, although the study did not confirm whether callers actually claimed and received these. The research did, however, carry out a follow-up survey of 300 BEC clients and found that 73% of clients entitled to benefits went on to make successful claims.

The research concluded that telephone advice was a suitable and appropriate method of delivery for many clients, as well as being relatively low cost. However, a comparative analysis of face to face advice provided by Help the Aged found that face to face may be more suitable for vulnerable older people. This was based on the finding that overall take-up levels were higher for this group, with higher take-up of disability benefits than that found with the BEC service.

2.11 New developments

The following gives a brief overview of current developments in the income maximisation field.

Making legal rights a reality (England and Wales)

This is a consultation issued by the Legal Services Commission in 2005. It proposes a strategy for the development of the Community Legal Service in England and Wales. It has implications for the voluntary advice sector in that a certain amount of income maximisation advice is now funded through legal aid. Its key proposals include:

- Expansion of its national telephone advice service
- The setting up of pilot community legal and advice centres in urban areas
- Establishing community legal and advice networks in rural areas

The proposals, if implemented, are likely to have knock-on effects for the services currently provided by CABx and other local voluntary advice providers. There are concerns that it could lead to a reduction of funding for independent, non-profit making advice providers.

Advice services strategy for Wales 2005-8

This is a consultation issued by the Community Legal Services in Wales in 2005. It proposes a strategic approach to the delivery and funding of legal and advice services in Wales. It aims to make sure that everybody has access to quality assured legal information and advice services, with a particular emphasis on low income households. The strategy aims to provide more secure, longer term funding for advice services.

A strategy for supporting the delivery of voluntary advice services to the community (Northern Ireland)

This is a consultation issued by the Department for Social Development in 2005. It proposes a strategy for delivering advice services that reach as many people as possible who need them across Northern Ireland. It proposes reorganising advice services such that a network of primary generalist providers (Area Hubs) is established at the local level. It is proposed these are backed up with specialist advice and information services operating at a regional level. The Strategy includes proposals for funding the new arrangements.

Promoting financial inclusion (UK)

In 2004, the Treasury announced the establishment of a new financial inclusion fund. This will help support the capacity of the money advice sector and pilot new methods of money advice outreach aimed at reaching those who do not normally present themselves to debt advisers. This fund may help support the provision of benefits advice, given its importance for resolving debt problems.

Financial exclusion action plan (Scotland)

The Scottish Executive action plan, issued in 2005, includes a range of initiatives for supporting money advice services (alongside other financial inclusion initiatives). This includes financial support for advice, developing a common IT infrastructure for money advice and other advice services and implementation of a common case management system.

Review of fuel poverty programmes (Scotland)

The Scottish Executive issued a review of its fuel poverty programmes in 2005, since the current programmes come to an end in March 2006. The review has three important implications for benefits advice:

- It proposes that BECs are also offered to people enquiring about Warm Deal, as well as CHI recipients (similar to the Warm Front system)
- It proposes to provide BECs face to face, rather than through a telephone advisory service.
- It proposes to run the BEC service under a separate contract to the managing agent role for the CHI and Warm Deal.

Link-age Plus (England)

The Pension Service is about to establish 9 pilot Link-Age Plus initiatives, based on local authority areas. The pilots will seek to integrate services for pensioners at the local level. While the pilots are still at a developmental stage, the intention is to integrate as full a range of services as possible in the long term. Services that are currently being considered include housing, safety, care needs, benefits and energy efficiency. The initiative is far reaching in that it will bring together services from a wide range of providers, e.g. local authority, Pension Service, voluntary sector advice providers. There will be an 18 month evaluation of the initiative, with a view to seeing how it could be rolled out across the country.

2.12 Implications of initiatives for income maximisation and fuel poverty

Apart from the two Scottish initiatives, none of the above initiatives explicitly refer to fuel poverty and/or energy efficiency advice. It is difficult to envisage how energy efficiency advice may form part of strategies generally concerned with legal aid (the 'Making legal rights a reality' and 'Advice services for Wales strategy'). However, a case could be made for ensuring advice addresses people's needs for energy efficiency measures, particularly those that are 100% grant aided, since this represents a form of income maximisation, particularly with respect to debt reduction⁹.

At the more general level, the initiatives have important implications for the feasibility of integrating income maximisation advice into fuel poverty services. They provide both barriers, e.g. possible contraction of advice provision, and opportunities, e.g. making sure fuel poverty objectives are built into the new approach to advice service provision. The Pension Service initiative appears particularly encouraging in this respect.

The Scottish Executive proposal to move towards providing benefits advice face to face forms part of a wider debate about methods of delivery. This was an important theme that arose from the strategic interviews and will be addressed in section 3.11.

2.13 Summary

The following summarises the above review and draws out the lessons for practice in the two advice sectors. It does not refer to integration issues since these are addressed later.

- The income maximisation advice sector has a much more extensive system for monitoring the impact of advice on clients than the energy efficiency advice sector. CABx, for example, follow-up up all clients and are able to provide detailed information about their circumstances. This enables Citizens Advice to provide precise details on

⁹ In that it can lead to reduced fuel bills and/or improved health due to better comfort levels and less anxiety about fuel bills.

benefits claimed, extra income received by clients and aggregate data on CABx work. Eaga's BEC service similarly has good monitoring and follow-up procedures for Warm Front cases, but less extensive procedures for monitoring the BECs provided for other programmes.

- CAB monitoring of referrals to energy efficiency grants is much less extensive than other forms of advice, even though these can help maximise incomes and improve health. Eaga's BEC service is able to provide this information, as would be expected given its role in managing the grant programmes.
- Fuel companies' energy efficiency advice services appear to carry out more extensive monitoring of advice provided than EEACs, including referrals to Warm Front and EEC, although there is little follow-up work. It is unlikely that suppliers will improve follow-up procedures unless they are allowed credits for advice provided through their EEC commitment. Suppliers will no doubt lobby for this as part of the next phase of EEC (due to start in 2008).
- Monitoring and follow-up of advice by EEACs is likely to improve with the move to Sustainable Energy Networks, including monitoring of referrals to grant and discount schemes and the number of clients actually taking up measures. However, energy advice will continue to emphasise the 'able to pay' sector, rather than 'fuel poor' households, without a new approach by EST or Defra.
- Most energy efficiency advice is provided over the telephone, backed up with written reports. Eaga provides energy efficiency advice to grant scheme clients in their homes, although this is not as detailed as that provided by EEACs or fuel company advice lines.
- Most income maximisation advice is provided face to face in local advice centres. However, there has been a trend in recent years to provide advice over the telephone and to some extent over the web. Key providers of telephone advice include the Pension Service, the Inland Revenue Tax Credits service, Eaga, local authority welfare rights units and the National Debt line. The Community Legal Service also plans to expand its telephone advice line, which will include advice on benefits and debt.
- CABx can draw upon an extensive evidence base through analysis of CASE, commissioned MORI surveys and social evidence forms for carrying out advocacy and policy development work. EEACs or SENs do not have a similar system and do not appear to use the SENSE database as a policy development tool.

3 INTERVIEW RESULTS AND WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

3.1 Methodology

Interviews

CSE carried out ten 'operational' semi-structured 'depth' interviews with practitioners working in the energy efficiency and income maximisation sectors. CSE also carried out thirteen 'strategic' semi-structured 'depth' interviews with people working at a 'policy' level in the two sectors. Most interviews were conducted over the telephone, with a few conducted face to face. The interview schedules used are given in Appendix 1. The schedules used for the strategic interviews were adapted slightly for some participants. For example, the interview with Eaga covered both operational and strategic issues.

CSE also carried out six more focussed interviews with representatives from the DTI, Child Poverty Action Group, Eaga (Warm Front network team), Warm Zones Ltd, Devon customer management centre and Citizens Advice Wales to clarify certain issues arising from the interviews.

Interviewees were selected to represent the range of providers in the two sectors and of people working in England, Scotland and Wales. A representative from Northern Ireland was not interviewed – it is acknowledged that this represents a gap in the research. However, experience in Northern Ireland was captured to some extent by the scheme review and the participation of NEA Northern Ireland in the workshop.

Representatives from the following organisations participated in the interviews:

Operational

Income maximisation advice sector

Pension Service (Scotland)
Advice Centre (working with a Warm Zone)
Local Age Concern
CAB Wales
CAB based in Scotland
Warm Zone
Eaga (Benefit Entitlement Check service)

Energy efficiency advice sector

EEAC (based in South West)
EEAC (based in London)
Fuel company advice line

Strategic

Fuel Poverty Advisory Group
EST
Defra
Welsh Assembly Government
Scottish Executive
British Gas
NEA
Eaga (Benefit Entitlement Check service)
Pension Service
Citizens Advice
Durham Welfare Rights Unit (Durham CC)
Devon Care Direct

Appendices 2 and 3 give a brief summary of the interview findings. Considerably more information was captured by the interviews. The research has focused on themes that were considered particularly pertinent to the issue of integrating welfare rights into fuel poverty services.

Workshop

Following the interviews, CSE held a workshop, hosted by Ofgem, for interview participants and other interested parties on 6 March 2006. The workshop focussed on four key themes arising from the interviews and scheme review:

- A comparison between the IM and EE advice sectors
- Telephone versus face to face methods of delivering advice
- Integration at the local level
- Integration at the national level

Appendix 4 includes notes from the workshop. The following summarises the findings of the interviews (operational and strategic) and workshop discussions. The term 'participant' is used to describe both interviewees and those taking part in the workshop.

3.2 Advising 'hard to reach' households

Both income maximisation (IM) and energy efficiency (EE) advice services used a variety of methods to make sure advice was given to 'hard to reach' households. This included use of language lines, interpreters, producing literature in different languages and use of large print.

Both advice sectors emphasised that central to reaching 'hard to reach' households was the ability to provide advice face to face and advice in the home. EEACs stated that they provided a limited amount of advice this way but would like to do a lot more. However, they are currently only funded to provide a limited amount of face to face advice. Accessing 'hard to reach' households is related to the issue of telephone-based delivery methods versus face to face delivery (see later discussion).

Many people are content to access advice over the telephone and will often find this more convenient than visiting an advice centre. However, the Social Exclusion Unit reports that disadvantaged groups "find it easier to get the information they need through face to face contact rather than over the telephone" (SEU, 2005). This includes people with low levels of literacy, disabled people and people with long term health conditions, people from certain ethnic minority groups and low income isolated older people. A large number of such households are likely to be fuel poor.

This would suggest that all advice services should have a facility to provide face to face advice if they are to reach households in greatest need of advice.

3.3 Funding

The Pension Service and fuel company interviewed did not consider funding an issue for their service. However, it was striking that many other interviewees referred to the withdrawal of services by Job Centres Plus. This included greater reliance on telephone delivery, lack of advice on benefits and no longer keeping benefit forms in job centre offices. It would seem reasonable to presume that these measures were taken, in part, to reduce costs.

The independent advice sectors both referred to such problems as:

- insufficient funds (EEACs specifically stated that they would like more funding to carry out face to face advice and home visits)
- lack of funding stability
- amount of time spent on fund-raising
- any additional monitoring requirements would require funding.

There does appear, however, to be a critical difference between the two sectors. There is a huge demand for IM advice services, which providers struggle to meet. By contrast, the energy efficiency advice sector often seeks to generate demand, since many people do not consider energy efficiency a priority.

There is also a difference with respect to geographical access. There does not appear to be significant difference in people's ability to access EE advice services in different parts of the country. This is perhaps not surprising, given that the service is predominantly provided over the telephone. However, there are big differences in people's ability to access locally delivered IM advice. A Citizens Advice report uses the term 'advice deserts' to describe the difficulty people have in many areas to access advice (Citizens Advice, 2004). The problem is particularly extensive in rural areas.

Many interviewees felt that BECs should be offered to all Warm Front clients, not just those enquiring about Warm Front and not on a passport benefit and those whose properties could not be brought up to SAP65. A number of interviewees also felt that funding should be provided for face to face advice to supplement the telephone service. The Scottish Executive is considering moving towards face to face being the main method of delivery, rather than over the telephone.

The use of face to face delivery obviously has cost implications. Citizens Advice state that they are struggling to meet existing demand, let alone demand generated by referrals from energy efficiency programmes. Warm Zones report that they recognised that the only way of ensuring demand for IM advice was met was to fund provision themselves. Provision of IM advice now represents a core element of Warm Zone services, alongside the coordination of delivery of EE measures.

3.4 Key partners

Both advice sectors refer to local authorities as being key partners. However, there is only limited acknowledgement of local IM advice centres by EEACs and of EEACs by IM advice centres. One EEAC referred to the difficulty its local CAB faced in meeting demand generated by an affordable warmth initiative in its area due to lack of funds, while another referred to using Care Direct in one part of the area it covered. EEACs were aware of Eaga's BEC service and did occasionally refer callers onto it.

One EEAC referred to a joint initiative with a local CAB, funded by the Pension Service's Partnership Fund, in which joint marketing was carried out to encourage benefit take-up and EE grant take-up. The initiative also involves reciprocal 'trigger training' between the two centres in benefits awareness and energy awareness.

It appears that the establishment of partnership arrangements between IM advice centres and EEACs will not happen without input from an outside agency or with the injection of extra funds. It is, however, striking that local authorities represent important partners for both advice sectors. The potential role of local authorities in encouraging integration is addressed in section 3.13.

3.5 Awareness of benefits and energy issues within two sectors

The operational interviews asked some basic questions about benefits to EE advice participants and about EE to IM advice participants (see interview schedules in Appendix 1). The results are given in Appendix 2 – see column headed ‘level of awareness’.

Only the Warm Zone participant answered all the energy efficiency questions correctly, perhaps not surprising given the integrated service provided by the Zone (Eaga was not asked this question). The CAB Wales participant stated that he did not know some of the answers off the ‘top of his head’ but could easily get this information from the Citizens Advice computer-based information system. Most IM advisers got the question about heat loss wrong, answering ‘roofs’, rather than ‘walls’.

The EE advice service participants did not know the level of benefits provided to either single working age households or pensioners. This again suggests that basic awareness of benefits issues was fairly low.

While only a limited number of people were interviewed for the research and can therefore not be considered at all representative, the findings suggest that awareness of fairly basic issues in the other sector is not high. This research is not suggesting that IM advisers become EE experts or EE advisers become IM experts. However, it contends that people working in the two sectors should have a basic awareness of issues in the other sector. Of course, the establishment of cross referral networks and awareness of where to send people is most critical.

Basic awareness of both benefits and energy issues forms a central element of schemes that have successfully set up cross referral systems, e.g. Luton, Devon Care Direct (see case studies). Further, if CABx are to play a more central role in referring people for EE grants, it is important that the CAB training programme includes EE awareness.

3.6 Monitoring systems within sectors

Reference has already been made to the monitoring systems used by CABx, EEACs and fuel company advice lines (see 2.4 and 2.10 above). The interviews and workshop confirmed that many stakeholders would like EE advice providers to follow up advice provided and monitor referrals to EE grant schemes and the income status of clients advised (using benefits claimed as a ‘proxy’ for low income). It is understood monitoring will improve as EEACs are replaced by Sustainable Energy Networks (SEN)¹⁰. Nevertheless, there is a danger that the EST’s primary focus for SENs on carbon will prevent more active engagement with fuel poverty. For example, a greater emphasis on fuel poverty might encourage more extensive use of face to face methods of delivery and specific monitoring of referrals to grant schemes.

Eaga suggested three possible routes for monitoring the amount of Warm Front referrals from EEACs:

¹⁰ However, information provided by the pilot North East SEN suggests that referrals to grant schemes (i.e. those for low income households) and referrals to discount schemes (i.e. those for ‘able to pay’ households) will be ‘bundled’ together. This will prevent monitoring of schemes specifically designed for low income households.

- All EEACs are allocated a referral code within its portal system, which all EEACs then use.
- Eaga develops a Warm Front leaflet with an EEAC marketing code
- Eaga establishes a specific telephone line for EEAC referrals (considered less likely).

Eaga also commented that, in its experience, EEACs varied considerably with respect to the number of Warm Front and other grant programme referrals they made to Eaga.

The independent IM advice sector has developed extensive monitoring systems, which is also valuable for advocacy and policy development. The Pension Service also carries out in-depth monitoring and is able to provide the most accurate feedback, not surprising given its direct access to clients' records. Independent advice centres report that they would like more feedback from the DWP on claim outcomes, rather than their current reliance on clients providing feedback (which can be quite difficult in the case of multiple benefit claims). The Scottish Executive suggested that it may be possible to use the MATRICS¹¹ system it has established for the IM sector to also monitor fuel poverty and take-up of energy efficiency grants.

Defra reported that it was satisfied with the monitoring information supplied by Eaga's BEC service. Eaga is obliged to provide this as part of its contract. However, the Scottish Executive and Welsh Assembly participants stated that they would like more detailed and accurate outcome information. This may reflect the manner in which BECs are incorporated into the different schemes, i.e. they are not used as a method of generating referrals to the EE grant programme in Wales and Scotland. It is possible that improved feedback could be given in Wales and Scotland by ensuring this is included in the contract with Eaga, with funding provided to ensure this.

A number of participants stated that monitoring and follow-up of fuel companies' BEC services needed improving. One participant suggested that companies should jointly develop a standardised approach to monitoring BECs.

It is striking that only Warm Zones actually monitor the impact of advice on households' fuel poverty levels (as measured by the Warm Zones), although the fuel company interviewed carried out 'area-level' monitoring through the use of a GIS-based fuel poverty proxy.

3.7 Cross referral systems

The existence of cross referral systems between the two advice sectors appears to be fairly limited. EEACs often use Eaga's BEC service and the Pension Service advice line, as well as local IM advice providers. However, there was a general view that EEACs would like to do a lot more. Some referred to the problem that local IM advice providers were already over-stretched.

Age Concern and Care Direct stated that they referred clients to EEACs. CABx in general do not appear to do this. Citizens Advice Wales referred to its perception that EEACs were more relevant to higher income households, while most of its clients were lower income.

¹¹ Money Advice, Training, Resources, Information and Consultancy Services, which provides training, consultancy and IT infrastructure resources.

Rather than establish cross referral systems, an alternative course of action would be for CABx to play an active role in referring clients direct to energy efficiency grant schemes. Citizens Advice Wales stated that CABx could do this, with additional funding. It estimated that provision of such advice would extend the typical advice session by 10 minutes. However, the agency considered there was insufficient HEES capacity to cope with the extra demand created, should CABx start promoting grants more proactively.

Citizens Advice England stated that all member CABx have to provide a core advice service. This means they are required to offer generalist advice on a list of topics. It is possible that 'financial capabilities' might be incorporated into the core service in the future; however, there would only be minor support for EE advice becoming core. Citizens Advice also referred to the role of funders (principally DTI and local authorities) in determining advice priorities.

CSE contacted DTI to establish whether it might ask Citizens Advice to prioritise advice on EE schemes in the future, given the Department's joint role for part funding CABx and for overseeing fuel poverty strategy. The DTI was concerned about the additional funding implications of following such a course and felt that there was greater potential in improving integration at the local level, as recommended in a paper by Mervyn Kohler (Kohler, 2005).

In brief, the paper recommends establishing a database of local, community organisations that can provide advice on fuel poverty, benefits or care needs. This would provide a resource to 'intermediaries' or 'fleeting visitors', such as doctors, carers or home helps who have contact with 'hard to reach' households. This is seen as a more effective method of providing information than use of conventional publicity routes. The paper does not address the issue of whether community organisations have the resources to provide the required advice and information.

3.8 Follow-up of referrals to other sector

If EE advice services refer clients on for benefits advice, it is obviously important that clients go on to make a claim for EE grant schemes. This requires providers to establish whether benefit claims are successful. It also requires the client to make a separate claim for the EE grant after a successful benefit claim. It is widely recognised that client drop-out increases with increased referrals to separate schemes.

Eaga's link with Pension Service demonstrates the value of integration. Client drop-out has declined significantly since the link was established. This is because clients only have to give permission at the initial contact for onward referrals from Eaga to the Pension Service for a Pension Credit claim and from the Pension Service back to Eaga for a Warm Front claim (clients can apply separately themselves, if preferred).

The fuel company advice line stated that since it uses Eaga to provide its BEC service, Eaga is able to refer clients on for Warm Front. Eaga will also refer back to the company if it considers it could benefit from a priority EEC scheme.

EEACs, however, stated that they do not follow up clients referred on for benefits advice to establish whether they have gone on to make a claim for Warm Front or other schemes. One stated that it encourages clients to get back in touch with the EEAC if their benefit claims are successful. The other stated that it was considering setting up a 'reminder'

system to follow up clients to establish benefit claim outcomes. However, it also stated that it was not funded to do this.

Most of the IM advice providers stated that they did not follow up clients advised to apply for an energy efficiency grant. Again, Warm Zones were the main exception (see case studies).

3.9 Role of fuel companies

Many participants expressed scepticism about fuel companies providing BEC services. They considered clients would not expect suppliers to have expertise in this field and would not naturally turn to this source for advice. One participant suggested that clients were more likely to accept supplier involvement when they form part of wider partnerships, such as Warmer Wales and Warm Zones. A number of participants thought it would be better if suppliers funded independent IM advice providers, rather than provide BECs themselves. It was acknowledged that fuel company charitable trusts have been helpful in this respect.

Some participants suggested that a small part of EEC is allocated to the provision of BECs. However, others argued that it would not be appropriate to spend money allocated for energy efficiency measures in this way. Eaga supported the proposal but argued that Ofgem should take responsibility for overseeing BECs and should allocate the revenue raised for this to an independent (from suppliers) provider.

Other specific proposals included:

- Improving links between income maximisation advice and suppliers' Priority Service Registers (see glossary).
- Suppliers should stop over-estimating Direct Debit bills since this leads to consumers paying more than they need to (presumably over-estimation is less of a problem during a period of rising fuel prices).
- Suppliers should help prepayment meter consumers move off this method of payment and take advantage of cheaper payment methods (prepayment tariffs are generally higher than standard credit tariffs and considerably higher than Direct Debit tariffs).

3.10 Telephone and face to face provision

Many participants suggested that face to face advice is more suitable for more vulnerable clients and/or clients that need to make claims for disability benefits. This reinforces the Social Exclusion Unit's finding that disadvantaged groups found it easier to access information through face to face contact, as reported above.

Devon Care Direct stated that the relationship between the telephone based service and Age Concern, who were responsible for coordinating the provision of face to face advice from local providers, worked well. Age Concern also coordinated the provision of advocacy services, should claims need to go to appeal. Durham CC Welfare Rights Unit referred to a similar arrangement with local voluntary advice providers. The Pension Service representative referred to the close relationship between its telephone advice and home visiting services. Telephone advisers were trained to recognise the circumstances in which it would be more appropriate to provide face to face advice.

A number of participants felt that the relationship between Eaga's BEC service and local advice providers needed improving. Defra and the Fuel Poverty Advisory Group argued that the two approaches could learn from each other. Eaga's approach was considered suitable for dealing with large volumes and provided results cost effectively. However, face to face advice may lead to clients providing more extensive information that can improve success rates of certain benefits. Several participants referred to the advantage of advisers picking up on 'non-verbal' clues.

It is possible that a key point of contention relates to Eaga referring some of its clients onto local advice providers, e.g. when it considers face to face advice is more suitable or when clients may be eligible for certain disability benefits, without any funding following this. It is notable that Devon Care Direct and Durham Welfare Rights Unit fund local advice providers to take referrals from their telephone-based services. However, Eaga argues that it only makes around 2,500 referrals per year to other agencies (CABx, Age Concern, Help the Aged etc). It does not consider this should present capacity issues but is prepared to revisit this if agencies can show that Eaga's referrals are creating problems.

Citizens Advice argued that the Government and Devolved Administrations should have tendered the BEC contracts separate to the managing agent contracts on the grounds that this would help ensure value for money.

3.11 Barriers to integration

Many participants referred to lack of funding as a major barrier to integration, particularly for the IM advice sector. However, several equated 'integration' with meaning advisers becoming specialists in both IM and EE advice. There was concern that this could lead to the disappearance of some advice providers.

This project does not expect advisers from the two advice sectors to become specialists in each other's fields. However, it does contend that clients should get as full a range of advice services as possible and that systems should be set up to ensure that the different providers 'talk to each other'.

One IM advice provider expressed concern that clients may not be prepared to provide information if they thought this was going to be shared with other organisations. However, this does not appear to be a problem with organisations that have set up such arrangements, although it is important that client safeguards and confidentiality are maintained with cross referral systems. Thus, while data protection was cited by some as a barrier, many others felt that this was easily addressed by getting clients' prior consent for their details to be passed on to other advisers.

Many participants did not consider integration will happen without external intervention. One participant stated that advice centres lacked resources to make links, build up the networks and establish the cross referral systems required. The Warm Zone representative stated that the Government and Devolved Administrations should recognise that coordination mechanisms have to be funded. Participants also contended that central direction and guidance (Government, DA or EST) is required to help establish coordination mechanisms at the local level.

Several participants commented on the fact that in most cases different parts of the local authority liaise with the two advice sectors, with little coordination within the local authority. One participant gave an example of how the establishment of a Warm Zone led to the creation of links between the welfare rights and energy efficiency advice sections within the local authority for the first time. Durham CC referred to how its 'wealth through warmth' campaign led the welfare rights unit to address energy efficiency grants much more seriously than it had in the past. The potential role of local authorities in helping integrate services is addressed in section 3.13.

The Defra and Welsh Assembly representatives referred to tensions between the IM advice and EE sectors. Reference was made to resistance from the IM sector to the EE sector getting involved in benefits advice. In turn, Citizens Advice expressed concern that BEC clients were not getting a full advice package and that telephone advice was not suitable for more disadvantaged clients (see 3.2 above). However, Eaga contends that it does offer advice on all benefits, not just those which give access to Warm Front or HEES etc.

A number of participants commented on the contrast between the Pension Service and Job Centres Plus, in which the former played an active role in encouraging take-up, while the latter did very little. It was accepted that Job Centres Plus prioritise getting people into work. However, participants considered it should still make sure people get their entitlement to benefits in the pre-work period. A workshop participant commented on the fact that 28% of fuel poor households in Northern Ireland are low waged working households. It is therefore important that benefit take-up is maximised for these households, e.g. Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and tax credits.

There are also many working age carers who miss out on benefits, despite the fact they provide a critical welfare service (the estimated value of all carers' support is £57 billion, Guardian, 15/3/06).

One follow-up interviewee suggested that the public expenditure implications of full take-up were considerable. The Treasury would face substantial strain if all eligible claimants received the benefits to which they were entitled.

Other barriers included the difficulty of integrating advice when there is two tier local government, the difficulty of knowing what exists when advice providers have to cover a large geographical area and issues relating to devolved and non devolved responsibilities.

Improving integration and joint working

There were many suggestions for improving integration or joint working between the IM and EE advice sectors. These are outlined below and are grouped by theme.

3.12 Awareness and training

Many participants referred to the need for both EE and IM advice providers to improve basic awareness and understanding of each other's work. Participants also referred to the need to build up relationships, partnerships, signposting and referral systems between the two sectors at a local level. Some participants stressed the importance of funding to do this, although EST and the Pension Service considered it was more an issue of good management, prioritisation and commitment than resources.

Participants also referred to the need to provide basic benefits awareness training to EE advice staff and basic EE awareness to IM staff. Training should include knowledge of where to refer clients to. One of the EEACs referred to the reciprocal 'trigger training' arrangement it had set up with a local CAB, which forms part of a Pension Service's Partnership Fund project (see 'case study no.8').

One participant suggested setting up directories of organisations working in the different sectors at a local level and the provision of regular bulletins with updates on the different schemes.

3.13 Local integration: a role for local government?

Many participants felt that coordination was best achieved at a local level. Local authorities were considered the most appropriate bodies to carry out this role, although Warm Zones were cited by many as demonstrating the full potential of local integration. A number of participants expressed concern about the extent to which local authorities differed in addressing fuel poverty and/or income maximisation issues. If local authorities are to play a central role in coordinating local advice services, this would require a strong steer and, in the view of some, resources from central government and devolved administrations.

Given that coordination of advice is likely to require funding, one participant suggested that areas with the highest level of fuel poverty should be prioritised for funding. The participant suggested using CSE's updated fuel poverty indicator to determine priorities (see www.cse.org.uk/cgi-bin/projects.cgi?featured&&1018 for more details). Another suggested rolling out Warm Zones across the most fuel poor areas in the country.

Participants suggested a range of existing developments within local government that could play a role in coordinating the different advice sectors. These include Local Area Agreements, local authority customer management systems (see glossary) and local affordable warmth strategies. All local authorities in Scotland are obliged to produce an Affordable Warmth Strategy (this is not a requirement in England, Wales or Northern Ireland). However, the Scottish Executive does not issue guidance to local authorities on specific measures that authorities are expected to undertake as part of their strategies.

The Pension Service representative considered the Link-Age Plus pilots will demonstrate the potential for integrating all services to pensioners at a local level, including energy efficiency and fuel poverty services. The Pension Service intends to eventually roll out the programme across the country. The representative also suggested that it would be useful to have 'fuel poverty champions' at the local level, charged with ensuring integration took place.

A number of workshop participants felt that integration was best carried out at a regional level, since regional bodies would be able to take a more strategic view than local authorities. It was suggested they could carry out the following functions:

- Help integrate EEC and Warm Front
- Provide a strategic overview of advice sectors, for example, make sure provision meets needs and coordinate the necessary partnerships and cross referral systems
- Include links with health, particularly given the establishment of new regional health authorities

However, one participant commented that regional development agencies currently have targets to reduce the number of benefits claimed in their regions. This would militate against them encouraging take-up initiatives.

3.14 National integration

A number of participants suggested that the Eaga/ Pension Service link-up should be replicated with other organisations. However, the Pension Service considered the arrangement could only work with centralised 'contact centre' advice services.

Several participants suggested that Job Centres Plus and the Inland Revenue should set up similar arrangements with Eaga as exists with the Pension Service, re cross referrals between benefits or tax credits and Warm Front grants. Concern was expressed that Job Centres Plus was moving in the opposite direction – it was making it more difficult for clients to claim the benefits to which they are entitled.

A number of participants suggested that benefits providers (e.g. DWP, local authorities, Inland Revenue) should aim to maximise the take-up of all benefits and tax credits, not just those they administered. Participants also felt that the DWP should respond to benefit claims and deal with appeals quicker than is currently the case. One participant suggested giving the DWP an explicit fuel poverty PSA.

Several participants suggested that simplifying the benefits system would help integration, as well as potentially reduce demand for advice in the first place. The move from the Minimum Income Guarantee to Pension Credit was cited as an example of simplification.

A number of participants suggested that EST, central government and the devolved administrations should make sure that EEACs give greater priority to encouraging the take-up of energy efficiency grants. This should include making sure cross referral systems exist with local IM advice providers and that use of the service by low income households is monitored.

Several participants argued that the Government should place a higher priority on income maximisation advice within its Fuel Poverty Strategy, particularly given the impact of advice on reducing fuel poverty. Several referred to evidence that a successful claim, on average, has a much bigger impact on reducing fuel poverty than the installation of insulation measures and is similar to the impact of installing a central heating system.

Participants suggested extending BECs to all Warm Front clients, offering BECs to Warm Deal and Warm Home Scheme clients and making sure scheme clients can access face to face IM advice, where appropriate. Defra stated that it was considering running a pilot project to extend BECs to all Warm Front clients but was looking to the DWP to help with funding. The DTI representative invited workshop participants to make a case for giving IM advice and integration a greater role in fuel poverty policy, when responding to the Government's Energy Review.

3.15 Meeting demand for IM services

If income maximisation is to play a greater role in fuel poverty services, it is critical that advice providers are funded to do this. Some of the original Warm Zone pilots expected existing local IM advice services to advise clients referred by Warm Zones without any additional funding (CSE/NEA, 2006). However, Zones soon recognised that local providers were already over-stretched – they would therefore have to fund extra capacity to meet the demand generated (see case studies). All current Warm Zones and Warm Wales now provide IM advice as a core service – a factor highlighted by the Warm Zone participant.

The Scottish Executive suggested that new resources from the financial exclusion fund could help meet demand for IM advice, as well as fund the establishment of cross referral systems.

Citizens Advice referred to developing a corporate access strategy to improve access to clients. This included the introduction of a triage access strategy, i.e. prioritisation of clients' need for advice. It would like to set up a centralised telephone system to help meet demand but currently lacks the resources to do this. Citizens Advice expressed concern that the Eaga BEC service was referring some clients onto CABx, without any extra resources to meet the demand generated.

One participant suggested that the Community Legal Service's proposals for reforming advice services might address the issue of under-provision, although another felt that the proposals were more about cutting funds than opening up new opportunities.

3.16 Integration from the perspective of clients

Participants were asked what they felt integration might mean from the perspective of clients. The responses given are not included in Appendices 2 and 3. However, participants' responses were very similar and are briefly described below.

Participants considered it particularly important that that every opportunity was taken to provide clients with a full advice package. The most difficult stage is making contact with clients in the first place. Once clients seek advice, it is important that their needs for both income maximisation and energy efficiency grants are recognised, as well as needs for other services, such as financial management, housing, home security, fire safety and independent living. Citizens Advice also stressed the importance of making sure that advice providers supported clients throughout the claims process. This is an important issue for EE grant claimants¹², as well as benefit claimants.

One Citizens Advice respondent argued that CABx are already set up to provide a full advice service – in this respect integration is not needed. However, other advice providers, including CABx, recognised that energy efficiency advice providers had expertise that they would find difficult to replicate.

Other aims included:

¹² NEA's 'barriers to take-up' research, also commissioned by the EEP-H FPSG, refers to the importance of following up clients, reassuring them about progress on claims and making sure that support services are provided, e.g. loft clearance (NEA, 2006).

- provision of as ‘seamless service’ as possible to clients
- minimising the need for clients to make separate claims for different benefits and grants
- providing a complete range of services in one visit or one claim: implies only needing to fill in one form
- ‘putting pensioners in charge of the service’
- gathering all client information in one step, so that clients do not have to provide similar information to different agencies
- increased health, wealth, comfort and quality of life.

3.17 Summary

- All advice services, both income maximisation and energy efficiency, should have a facility to provide face to face advice if they are to reach households in greatest need of advice.
- A considerable amount of IM advice is provided face to face, whereas only a limited amount of EE advice is provided this way.
- Telephone based IM services have grown in recent years. Three of the providers interviewed also have arrangements to provide face to face advice, either directly (Pension Service) or through funding a separate agency (Devon Care Direct, Durham Welfare Rights Unit).
- Eaga’s BEC service demonstrates the value of using telephone-based services. It is cost effective, good at dealing with volumes and has set up an innovative link with the Pension Service. However, there is no formal facility to provide face to face advice, other than advising clients to contact a local advice provider.
- Citizens Advice argued that the Government and Devolved Administrations should tender the BEC service separately to the grant managing agents’ contract. However, it is important that people enquiring about grants and not on a passport benefit can access advice at the point of making the enquiry. The current system does therefore represent a good example of integration.
- Insufficient and insecure funding was a major issue for most IM advice providers. EEACs reported that they would like more funding to provide face to face advice and carry out home visits.
- Accepting that only a small number of people were interviewed, there appears to be limited awareness of benefits issues by EE advisers and of EE issues by IM advisers, with the exception of the Warm Zone interviewed.
- Improved integration requires awareness training, building up relationships and partnerships, establishment of cross referral systems, funding to achieve this and coordination structures to make sure it happens. Integration does not imply IM and EE advisers becoming specialists in each other’s subjects.
- Many considered that integration was best achieved at the local level. Local authorities could play a key role in this respect, although Warm Zones represented another possible route. Both local EE and IM advice providers referred to local authorities as key partners, although the two sectors tend to liaise with different parts of the local authority.

- If local authorities are to play a greater role in coordinating advice provision, central government should provide a strong steer to authorities to do this. Ideally, all local authorities should adopt an Affordable Warm Strategy, as is the case in Scotland, with 'coordination of advice' being a key component of such strategies.
- Several participants suggested that integration should be a regional function, rather than local. They argued that regional bodies were more able to take a strategic view.
- Monitoring and follow-up appears to be more rigorous and in-depth in the IM sector than in the EE sector, confirming the scheme review finding. This includes Eaga's BEC service, although there appears to be room for improvement in HEES, CHI and suppliers' BEC services.
- It is likely that the move from EEACs to SENs will improve the monitoring of energy efficiency grant take-up, although it is important that this is monitored separately to take-up of discount schemes, given the different nature of the two client groups. SENs may also improve partnership working with the IM sector. However, the continued focus on carbon saving will militate against SENs adopting a fuel poverty focus. It is not clear whether SENs will monitor the income status of clients advised, e.g. through use of 'benefits claimed' as a proxy.
- Many felt that IM advice should play a more central role in the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy. This includes extending BECs to all Warm Front, Warm Home Scheme and Warm Deal beneficiaries; making provision for face to face advice and increasing funding for local IM advice providers. The Government should recognise that the existing BEC service has generated additional demand for face to face services and should provide funding to meet this demand.
- Participants also considered that the Eaga/Pension Service link-up should be replicated by Job Centres Plus and the Inland Revenue with respect to working age benefits and tax credits. Job Centres Plus should in general be more proactive in encouraging benefit take-up.
- Participants considered that integration from the perspective of clients meant the provision of as full a range of advice as possible in one go. Information gathering should be contained within one stage, repeated applications minimised and support provided to clients throughout the claims process. Ultimately, integration should mean improved health, wealth, comfort and quality of life for clients.

4 CASE STUDIES

CSE, using a mix of literature review, web searches and interviews, produced eight case studies of schemes that have successfully integrated income maximisation and energy efficiency advice into fuel poverty services. The case studies have been written up so that they can be read as 'stand alone' studies. This chapter gives a brief description of the schemes and draws out their implications for policy.

The schemes featured are:

Camden London Borough Council Affordable Warmth Strategy
Care Direct Devon
Luton Borough Council Affordable Warmth Referral Scheme
Newcastle Warm Zone
Newham Warm Zone
Swansea Council 'Real Changes' fuel poverty action plan
Eaga Benefit Entitlement Check service
CSE/North East Somerset CAB 'Benefiting from Warmth'

4.1 Camden

A key feature of Camden's affordable warmth strategy is its WISH (Warmth, Income, Safety and Health) referral scheme. This provides a single referral route for frontline staff working with vulnerable clients. Central to the system is a freephone telephone number operated by North and West London EEAC. Frontline staff are trained to recognise clients who may require health, housing, care or benefits advice. The advice line then arranges for help from specialist providers, including:

- PCT reach team
- Camden LBC home safety team (small adaptations) or Occupational Therapy (specialist adaptations)
- EEAC – energy efficiency and tariff advice
- Eaga – Warm Front and Warm Front top-up (Council funded) and BECs
- Camden LBC – EE measures for Council tenants and EE discounts for private households not eligible for Warm Front
- CAB, Age Concern, Camden LBC welfare rights unit for benefits and debt advice (provider depends on nature of need, age and tenure)
- Safe as Houses – safety measures
- Fire Brigade – fire safety measures
- Environmental Health and Mobile Repair Service – major and minor repairs for private households

Clients are asked to give their permission for their details to be forwarded on to partner agencies when contacting the advice line.

4.2 Care Direct Devon

Care Direct Devon is a multi-agency information and advice service for older people and their carers. The scheme is managed by the Pension Service and hosted by Devon County Council Social Services Department. A telephone-based advice line represents the core

element of the service. Care Direct advisors identify callers' needs for a range of services including:

- Energy efficiency advice and grants (EEAC, Warm Front, Heat Devon)
- Financial and benefits advice (Finance and Benefits (FAB) team, Age Concern)
- Care needs (Social Services and FAB)
- Health needs (PCT)

Care Direct uses the LAGAN client management system to log clients' details and refer clients on for the services required. This can be done via email for those requiring Social Services support or by fax for external agencies (Care Direct plans to set up an email system for these as well in the future). A pre-recorded message at the beginning of calls informs callers that their details may be forwarded on to partner agencies. This addresses data protection issues.

Care Direct has access to the DWP's remote access terminal, allowing it to track progress on clients' benefits claims. It also follows up clients who were sent claim forms but have not returned them. Clients with care needs are referred to the FAB team for benefits advice. Those not requiring care are referred to Age Concern who coordinate the provision of face to face advice by local independent advice agencies. If clients need to appeal against a DWP decision, they are referred to Devon CAB.

Care Direct is also involved in NEA's 'rural energy champions' scheme, whereby front-line staff are given energy efficiency training so that they can incorporate EE advice within their existing responsibilities. The project involves extensive community outreach work with community groups in remote rural areas to promote energy efficiency and benefits advice.

Care Direct also works with district nurses to encourage them to use Care Direct's benefit advice service. Nurses are given annual feedback on the amount of extra benefits they have helped clients gain through using the service.

Care Direct is about to be incorporated into Devon County Council's new corporate customer services centre – an integrated system for all enquiries and contacts with the Council. This will help ensure advice forms a central element of the new arrangements.

4.3 Luton

A key feature of Luton Borough Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy is its unified affordable warmth referral scheme. This connects front-line workers in the Council, health and voluntary sectors with service providers. Referral agents are given basic awareness training in energy, benefits and care needs and in how to use the referral system. Referrers use a single referral form (available in electronic and paper format) and send this to a central point within the Council. The Council's affordable warmth team then coordinates the provision of three forms of help:

- Warmth (EEAC, Warm Front, Council grants)
- Benefits (CAB)
- Care needs to enable independent living (Social Services)

Many clients will require two or even three forms of help. The system minimises the need for clients to make separate applications to different service providers.

4.4 Newcastle Warm Zone

Central to the Warm Zone is the use of door to door assessors who systematically go through the city on a street by street, ward by ward basis. Assessors collect basic energy efficiency and income data from households. This information is then logged onto a central database offering a powerful means of analysing energy efficiency, income and benefits data. The Warm Zone coordinates the provision of free benefits and energy efficiency advice and the implementation of energy efficiency measures (cavity wall and loft insulation and heating). It aims to provide some form of assistance to all households in Newcastle.

Free measures are offered to all fuel poor households (whether or not on benefits), homes on qualifying benefits, all Council owned homes and homes in certain special funding areas. In addition, a heavily discounted “Newcastle Home Energy Savers” scheme is offered to the remaining ‘able to pay’ households. The Zone has received funding from a number of organisations (including Newcastle City Council, National Grid, ScottishPower and the European Union) to provide the coordination, assessment and benefits advice service, as well as energy efficiency measures. The level of funding secured by the Zone enables it to offer measures to the many fuel poor households not eligible for Warm Front.

The Warm Zone employs its own benefits advice staff - who are supported by the Council’s welfare rights unit - to meet demand for advice created by the assessment team. The Zone follows up all households offered help by the Zone. In this way, it is able to monitor the impact of both measures and benefits advice on households, including impact on households’ fuel poverty status.

The Zone’s work represents the central delivery element of the Newcastle Affordable Warmth Strategy, a broad-based partnership including Newcastle City Council, Your Homes Newcastle (the housing ALMO) and many other public, private and voluntary organisations.

4.5 Newham Warm Zone

Newham uses a similar approach to Newcastle in that door to door assessors are employed to systematically identify householders’ needs for energy efficiency measures and benefits. The Zone differs from Newcastle in that benefits advice is provided by an independent, voluntary advice centre, rather than through an in-house team. The centre is funded by the Zone to take benefits referrals from its assessment team. Householders receiving benefits advice who go on to make a successful claim are referred back to the Zone to start the Warm Front claims process. Clients give prior consent for their details to be referred back to the Zone to address data protection issues.

The Warm Zone receives funding from EDF Energy and Newham Borough Council to provide the team’s administration costs, benefits advice service, assessment costs and provision of measures. This includes a unique Warm Zone Grant that funds measures for fuel poor households not eligible for Warm Front.

4.6 Swansea

Swansea Council’s ‘Real Changes’ fuel poverty action plan is still in its early stages of implementation. However, it represents a detailed plan for combating fuel poverty that was developed through extensive consultation with key partners and community organisations.

The provision of benefits, tariff and energy efficiency advice forms a central element of the plan, alongside installation of energy efficiency measures.

The plan aims to tackle fuel poverty in all tenures. A wide range of agencies are involved in delivering the different aspects of the plan.

4.7 Eaga Benefit Entitlement Check (BEC) service

Eaga provides a BEC service as an integral element of its responsibility for managing the Warm Front, HEES and CHI schemes. Eaga also provides a BEC service for four fuel suppliers. In Wales and Scotland, BECs are offered to all beneficiaries of the schemes. In England, BECs are offered to Warm Front enquirers not on a passport benefit or to Warm Front claimants in hard to treat properties (where Warm Front measures cannot bring the property up to SAP65).

Three aspects of integration are worth highlighting, particularly with respect to their impact on reducing client drop-out:

- Clients enquiring about Warm Front are offered a BEC at the point of enquiry, rather than being told to contact another agency.
- With clients' consent, Eaga can forward client details direct to the Pension Service to process for Pension Credit.
- For successful claims, the Pension Service will forward client details back to Eaga to begin the Warm Front claim process

Eaga would like to set up similar links (to that with the Pension Service) with Job Centres Plus and the Inland Revenue, with respect to cross referral arrangements for working age benefits and tax credits.

4.8 Benefiting from warmth

CSE and North East Somerset CAB, with funding from the Pension Service's Partnership Fund, have set up an advice, outreach and referral partnership designed to increase take-up of both Pension Credit (and related benefits) and Warm Front grants. The project is targeted at older people in rural North East Somerset and Mendip. Each partner provides 'trigger training' to the other in benefits and energy awareness. The training is also provided to secondary referral agencies, such as local community hospitals, Age Concern and community groups.

A referral card is used to capture client information required for making benefit or grant claims. By agreeing to have information recorded on cards, clients also give consent for their details to be passed on to partner agencies. All referrals generated by the project are entered on a client database held at the EEAC. This allows staff to monitor extra benefits and grants claimed and keep track of benefit outcomes, so that clients can be referred on for Warm Front.

4.9 Summary

The above case studies demonstrate the value of integrating benefits advice into fuel poverty services. It is notable that, with the exception of Eaga, all are local examples of integrated services. Local authorities play a key role in four of the examples (Camden,

Luton, Swansea and Devon) and are important partners in a further two (Newcastle and Newham Warm Zones). Other implications include:

- Telephone and face to face methods of delivery can successfully complement each other (Devon and Camden) but this needs to be recognised in a formal partnership arrangement.
- Independent IM advice providers can work closely with the Pension Service (Devon); however, it is important that the former is still able to provide an advocacy service.
- Funding is required to provide coordination mechanisms – integration will not happen without this.
- The provision of feedback on successful claims to referral agents is an important motivator for agents to stay involved with schemes.
- Data protection issues can be addressed by securing clients' prior consent to pass on their details to other agencies involved in partnership initiatives.
- It is important that schemes continue to sustain and develop partnerships, rather than see this as a process that only occurs at the beginning of schemes.
- The importance of providing as complete an advice package as possible to scheme clients (Camden and Devon are particularly notable).
- Reducing the need for clients to make multiple and separate applications for different services reduces client drop-out.
- The provision of basic awareness training to advice staff and referrers represents an important element of a number of schemes (CSE/NESCAB, Luton, Camden, Care Direct).
- The adoption of a local Affordable Warmth Strategy was an important spur for integrated action in a number of schemes (Camden, Luton, Newcastle, Swansea)

5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research has demonstrated that many stakeholders consider income maximisation can play a greater role in combating fuel poverty than is currently the case. Both IM and EE advice sector workers are willing to forge closer links, so that they can jointly combat fuel poverty more effectively. However, it is not likely that joint working will happen without external intervention and resources.

The case studies mainly focussed on local initiatives to provide coordination structures for partnership working, cross referral systems and integrated approaches. Key agents in this respect are local authorities, Warm Zones and the Pension Service. The Eaga BEC service represents a national example of integration and has helped increase the overall supply of benefits advice to householders. It has also developed an innovative referral system with the Pension Service that reduces the need for older clients to apply to separate agencies.

There are opportunities for the two advice sectors to learn from practice in the other sector, for example the importance of providing advice face to face, the value of following up clients, the use of client monitoring for policy and development purposes and the value of gathering all client information in one stage.

Improved integration requires awareness training, building up relationships and partnerships, establishment of cross referral systems, funding to achieve this and coordination structures to make sure it happens. Integration does not imply IM and EE advisers becoming specialists in each other's subjects. However, a key message from the research was that when clients seek any sort of advice, every effort should be made to ensure they receive as complete a package of advice as possible.

Many IM advice centres already aim to provide a 'complete advice package'. However, the research suggests that advice on energy efficiency grants is given a low priority.

Most IM advice is provided face to face, either in advice centres or in people's homes. There is evidence that this method of delivery is more suitable for vulnerable households and clients needing to make complex disability claims. There has been a growth in telephone-based IM advice, although most providers have a facility to provide face to face advice, where appropriate. The exception is Eaga's BEC service, which, although advising clients to contact local advice centres where necessary, does not have a formal arrangement with local centres to take referrals. Eaga has offered to review this situation if advice centres provide evidence that referrals are creating capacity problems.

The case studies suggest that successful schemes have recognised the need to provide funding to local IM advice centres to meet the additional demand created by schemes. Most local IM advice centres are already over-stretched and need further resources to provide additional capacity.

The EE advice sector has only limited capacity to provide advice face to face and instead relies mainly on telephone based delivery. EEAC workers would like to provide more face to face advice and advice in people's homes. They would also like to follow up clients more extensively to establish whether they have acted upon the advice.

The EST does not require EEACs to monitor households referred to EE grant schemes or the number of low income clients advised (using 'benefits claimed' as a proxy), although this information is collected. Eaga has offered to put in place systems that will enable it to monitor referrals from EEACs, although it notes that EEACs vary considerably in the extent to which they make referrals for grants.

EEAC monitoring and follow-up should improve with the move to Sustainable Energy Networks (SEN), if practice established by the pilots is extended to the eventual full programme. The emphasis placed on partnership building will also encourage SENs to build links with Eaga and other grant providers. However, the EST's priority for SENs on carbon saving will lead to an emphasis on the 'able to pay' sector, rather than the 'fuel poor'. A greater emphasis on fuel poverty, for example, may encourage more extensive use of face to face advice, separate monitoring of referrals to grant schemes and a stronger focus on seeking partnerships with IM advice providers.

Many consider that integration is best achieved at the local level, although regional bodies may also help. Local authorities are well suited to carry out this role, although Warm Zones represent another possible route. If local authorities are to play a role, central government should provide a strong steer and funding for coordination mechanisms. Ideally, all local authorities should adopt an Affordable Warm Strategy, as is the case in Scotland, with 'coordination of advice' being a key component. The local authority trend to set up customer management centres and the Pension Service's Link-Age Plus initiative also represent potential opportunities for integrated advice.

Many consider IM advice should play a more central role in the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy. This includes extending BECs to all Warm Front, Warm Home Scheme and Warm Deal beneficiaries; making provision for face to face advice and increasing funding for local IM advice providers. The Government should recognise that the existing BEC service has generated additional demand for face to face services and should provide funding to meet this demand.

Integration from the perspective of clients means the provision of a full range of advice in one stage. Clients' requirements for different advice should be captured in one information gathering stage, repeated applications minimised and support provided to clients throughout the claims process. Ultimately, integration should mean improved health, wealth, comfort and quality of life for clients.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All advice services, both income maximisation and energy efficiency, should have a facility to provide face to face advice so that they are able to reach households in greatest need of advice.
2. The new Sustainable Energy Networks (and existing EEACs) should be set an explicit objective of combating fuel poverty and advising low income households, as well as reducing carbon emissions in the domestic sector. This requires:
 - The introduction of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for 'number of low income households advised' and 'customers advised face to face'.
 - Increased funding for face to face advice and home visits.
 - Monitoring of 'clients referred onto 100% grant schemes', i.e. this is monitored separately to 'clients referred onto discount schemes'.

- Working with Eaga to monitor EEAC-generated grant referrals. All EEACs/SENs should use Eaga's portal system to facilitate this.
3. The EST and SENs should make greater use of the EEAC/SENs client database for advocacy and policy development purposes. The EST should establish direction and guidance on the collection of relevant information to support this (as takes place in CABx).
 4. Citizens Advice should place a higher priority on advising clients of possible entitlement to energy efficiency grants. Current funders should recognise that this will require CAB to spend more time with clients, both at the initial advice stage and with follow-up.
 5. Integrated advice requires advice workers to acquire a basic awareness of issues in each other's sector and knowledge of where to refer clients. It also requires providing clients with a full advice package, capturing all required information in one stage, minimising the need for repeated applications and supporting clients throughout the claims process. This requires reform of benefit administration systems, as well as advice structures.
 6. The Government and Devolved Administrations should fund local agencies, e.g. local authorities or Warm Zones, to coordinate advice provision from the different services. Funding should cover the costs of partnership building, setting up cross referral systems and provision of awareness training in the two sectors. If necessary, central funding should prioritise areas with greatest need.
 7. The Pension Service Link-Age Plus initiative presents an important opportunity to address affordable warmth and energy efficiency within the integrated local service model for older people. It is important that the initiative recognises the advocacy role of the independent advice sector. Separate arrangements are still required for low income and fuel poor households of working age.
 8. All local authorities should be required to produce affordable warmth strategies, as in Scotland, of which coordination of advice should form an important element. Local authority customer management systems should make integrated advice a central feature of the new systems. The ODPM should provide guidance on how this might be achieved.
 9. The Government and Devolved Administrations should recognise that the BEC service provided as part of energy efficiency grant programmes has generated additional demand for face to face advice, e.g. for clients where this is a more suitable method of delivery or when clients need to appeal. Funding should be provided to meet this demand, rather than expect existing providers to absorb it, on the principle of funding following the client.
 10. The Government and Devolved Administrations should place a higher priority on income maximisation within the Fuel Poverty Strategy, in recognition of the high impact it has on reducing fuel poverty. This entails:
 - Providing BECs to all Warm Front claimants
 - Providing BECs to Warm Home Scheme and Warm Deal claimants
 - Making provision for the BEC service to have access to funded face to face advice
 - Increasing funding for local IM advice providers (tied to a requirement to integrate with local energy advice provision)
 - Job Centres Plus and the Inland Revenue setting up similar cross referral systems with Eaga as currently exists with the Pension Service

- Job Centres Plus giving a higher priority to benefit take-up, both for 'pre-work' and 'in-work'/'about to start work' clients.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES

Operational interviews

Basic organisational issues

1. How is advice provided? (over the telephone, face to face in centre, home visits)
(make sure 'other' is specified, e.g. events)
2. If advice is provided in different settings, what % is delivered in each setting?
(any other comments)
3. How do you make sure advice is provided to the 'hard to reach', e.g. people with poor literacy skills, people whose first language is not English? *Prompt: what methods do you use to provide advice to these groups?- e.g. leaflets in different languages, face-to-face contact if not able to use phone, interpreters provided?*
4. How are staff trained? Please give details of both initial and refresher training.
5. What additional training would you like staff to receive, funding permitted?
6. What systems do you have in place to address policy issues that might arise from providing advice?
7. Is affordable warmth included within your organisation's core objectives (*ask for details*)?

Funding (*please distinguish between core service and special projects*)

8. What are the principle sources of funding for the service?
9. How secure is the funding for the service (e.g. longevity)?
10. How much time does your organisation spend on obtaining funds for the advice service?
11. How might funding regimes be improved? e.g. extended terms of funding, greater core funding for service.

Monitoring and evaluation (*please distinguish between core service and special projects*)

12. What quality assurance systems does your service use?
13. How do you monitor the impact of advice on individual clients?, e.g. follow up calls, visits, mailouts, etc.
14. What type of monitoring information do you collect? For example, do you collect details of client groups helped, type of advice given, number of people referred for WF grants, number of people referred to EEC schemes, number of referrals for benefits advice?¹³
15. Who do you report monitoring information to and how often?
16. Do you monitor impact of advice on SAP and/or fuel poverty?
17. What proportion of your clients are low income? (How do you know this?)
18. What proportion of clients get referred for 100% grants (WF or EEC)?
19. What proportion of these go on to have measures installed or make any behavioural changes?
Follow up: How do you know this (i.e. what are your follow up procedures)?
20. Why do you think some people do not take up measures?
21. What procedures do you have for evaluating or reviewing the service you provide?

Awareness (EE staff)

I am going to ask you some basic questions about benefits to get an idea of your current awareness of benefits issues. I apologise if they seem very obvious. I will be asking the welfare rights staff I interview some basic questions about energy awareness.

22. What benefits may a client be entitled to if they are over 65 years old and have care needs?
23. Is receipt of Attendance Allowance dependent on?

A: Amount of Income

B: Amount of Savings

C: Care Needs only

24. What is the Income Support rate for a single adult over 25 with no other needs? Is it:

¹³ Benefits advice staff were asked if they collected information on number of people referred for new benefit claims, amount of extra benefits claimed, number of referrals for energy advice.

A: £56

B: £90

C: £109

25. What is the basic Pension Credit rate for a single pensioner with no savings or other income? Is it:

A: £56

B: £90

C: £109

26. Are staff made aware of basic benefits issues? If so, how are they made aware (training, briefings, journals etc)?

27. How are staff kept updated about benefits issues, e.g. changes to benefit rates or eligibility criteria?

Awareness (benefits advice staff)

28. In an un-insulated house where is most of the heat lost? Is it:

A: Walls

B: Draughts

C: Roof

29. If you receive Pension Credit, how much of a grant could you be entitled to for energy efficiency measures? Is it:

A: Up to £700

B: Up to £1750

C: Up to £2700 (*note: if they are familiar with Warm Front they might reasonably say £4,000, since this is the maximum when people have oil central heating*)

30. Do you know the names of any energy efficiency grant schemes and who provides them? (*Check whether they know of any schemes other than Warm Front and who provides them, e.g. fuel companies, local authorities*)

31. What is the definition of fuel poverty? How many households currently live in fuel poverty in England?

32. Are staff made aware of basic energy grant issues? If so, how are they made aware (training, briefings, journals etc)?

Referrals (*please distinguish between core service and special projects*)

33. If staff think that a client might be eligible for benefits/energy advice, who do you refer them to for specialist help?

34. Do you have a system in place to make sure that the clients you referred for benefits advice are subsequently referred for EE grants?/Do you have a system in place to make sure that clients you referred for EE grants subsequently take them up?

35. Do staff have reservations/concerns about referring somebody on for benefits/EE advice?

Integration (*please distinguish between core service and special projects*)

36. Who are your key partners?

37. What joint working arrangements are you currently involved in?

38. What do you think are the barriers to joint working between EE and benefits advice? (funding etc)

39. What do you think are the opportunities for joint work between EE and benefits advice services?

40. How do you think joint working might be improved, e.g. LA coordination, funding (please specify what funding would be needed for)?

41. If you have an integrated approach to benefits and energy advice, how did you achieve this?

42. Are there any other forms of advice or help that you think should be integrated with benefits and energy advice, e.g. independent living, home safety, home security?

43. What do you think integration might mean for the client (*e.g. one form, one telephone number, seamless service*)?

44. Do you have any common systems in place between EE and benefits advice, e.g. database of clients? If Yes – what is it?

45. If not, what do you think might be the barriers to establishing common systems, e.g. data protection, funding? How might these be overcome?
46. Do you have any other ideas for improving the integration of benefits advice and advice on energy efficiency grants for low income households?

Thank you for your time.

Strategic interviews

Integration at local level

(focus on EEACs and CABx)

1. Do you think energy efficiency advice services could do more to encourage take-up of benefits? *Prompt: what?*
2. Do you think benefits advice services could do more to encourage take-up of Warm Front and other energy efficiency grants? *Prompt: what?*
3. What organisational barriers do you think might prevent better integration of energy efficiency and benefits advice services? *Prompt: funding, data protection, sharing databases*
4. What structural or policy barriers do you think might prevent the integration of energy efficiency advice and benefits advice services? Please give examples from both services?
5. How do you think these barriers might be overcome? *(e.g. local authority coordination, training, development of common systems)*

Integration at national level

6. Do you think monitoring of the impact of benefits advice could be improved? If so, how?
7. Do you think monitoring of the impact of energy efficiency advice could be improved (particularly with respect to low income households)? If so, how?
8. Do you think the funding regimes governing the provision of welfare rights and energy efficiency advice services could be improved? If so, how?
9. Do you think Government fuel poverty (energy efficiency) programmes should include more income maximisation measures?
10. What improvements would you like to see?
11. Do you think fuel companies could play a greater role in helping maximise incomes? If yes, how?
12. How do you think the DWP might help maximise the incomes of fuel poor households? *(Distinguish between Pension Service and Job Centres Plus)*
13. What are the current mechanisms for ensuring integration between DWP, DTI & DEFRA to help maximise take-up of Warm Deal, priority EEC and benefits? Could these be improved?
14. Do you think local government could play a greater role in ensuring local coordination of advice services? How might this happen?
15. What is your perspective on volume, call centre style approaches to advice provision, e.g. BECs, and more personalised local services, e.g. CABx? Do you think there are opportunities for closer links between the two approaches?
16. How do you think integration from the perspective of individual clients might be improved, e.g. reduce need to go to different agencies for advice/help, 'trigger' referral mechanisms, one form?

APPENDIX 2: OPERATIONAL INTERVIEW RESULTS

Income maximisation organisations

Organisation	Hard to reach	EE advice/ referrals for grants	Funding	Monitoring	Level of awareness ¹	Awareness training in EE?	Follow up clients referred for EE grants?	Key partners	Barriers to joint work	Ways of improving joint working	Common systems
Pension Service (Scotland)	Language line Home visits	EE advice offered Refer to CHI.	Not an issue	Follow up all benefit claims. Monitor referrals to EE, Soc Serv etc.	A: wrong B: right C: right D: wrong E: DK	No systematic training	No	Soc Serv NHS district nurses Eaga	No. of orgs. Other orgs don't work on same scale as Pension Service	Coordination by local or central govt. Directory of orgs in different sectors. Regular bulletin with updates on schemes	None
Advice Centre (WZ)	Interpreters Home visits	Refer to WF & WZ	Very insecure Lack of stability	Follow up all benefit claims. DWP informs centre if claim successful.	A: wrong B: right C: right D: wrong E: DK	Yes: provided by WZ	WZ follows up	LAs WZ CLSP DWP	Lack of awareness	WZ played a key role. Get clients' permission to refer on at outset.	WZ has integrated system
Age Concern	Outreach in local centres, inc. Asian day centre. Home visits	Refer to EEAC	3 year (Lottery). A lot of time spent on fund-raising	All clients followed up. Customer satisfaction surveys. Focus groups.	A: wrong B: right C: right D: wrong E: DK	Limited	No	Other advice agencies. DWP	Funding. Data protection - clients may be unwilling to provide info if shared.	More info on other advice services, inc. EE advice. Better signposting.	None
CAB Wales	Interpreters Home visits Literature in different languages	Don't refer all clients to HEES - not enough capacity. Refer some clients to other schemes.	Funding not increased with inflation	All clients followed up. CASE	A: wrong B: DK* C: DK* E: right F: right	EE info included on information base	Follow up all cases referred (HEES or other schemes)	WAG WCVS CLSP LA DWP	Not all orgs have same standards	Fund CABx to take on IM take-up work for WZs, HEES etc. Roll out pilots if successful. Integrated projects must support clients throughout process.	None
CAB Scotland	Interpreters Home visits	Refer to 'schemes'	3 year: LA Would like more core funding	Most benefit clients followed up. Rely on clients to provide info.	A: wrong B: DK C: DK D: right E: DK	Briefings	No	Legal Services Agency	Funding. Integration might mean some organisations disappear.	CABx provide full advice service - do not need integration.	None

Organisation	Hard to reach	EE advice/referrals for grants	Funding	Monitoring	Level of awareness ¹	Awareness training in EE?	Follow up clients referred for EE grants?	Key partners	Barriers to joint work	Ways of improving joint working	Common systems
Warm Zone	Outreach in local centres. Large print/other language leaflets	Most referrals are to WZ schemes; otherwise LA, WF, suppliers	European funding: complex. Would like l/t funding. Funding needed for coordination & IM.	Most clients followed up. All data recorded on MAXIM. Includes FP data.	A: right B: right C: right D: right E: right	6176 training	Yes	Job Centre Plus, Pension Service, CAB, LA, fuel company	Scheme coordination & IM advice needs funding. No feedback from DWP on benefit claims.	Provide core funding for integration service. Make sure all advice is provided when clients contacted. Government should prioritise IM advice as part of FPS.	Yes
Eaga BEC service	Help with filling in forms. Network team liaises with front-line agencies.	Provided by Eaga surveyors in clients' homes. Leaflets left with householders.	Funded as part of WF, HEES, CHI programmes & by 4 suppliers.	All WF clients followed up. Sample of other scheme clients followed up.	Not asked.	Yes.	Yes, since also manages EE grants.	Defra, WAG, SE, suppliers, DWP.	See strategic interview	See strategic interview.	Yes.

Energy efficiency organisations

Organisation	Hard to reach	Benefits advice	Funding	Monitoring	Level of awareness ²	Awareness training in benefits?	Follow up clients referred for IM advice?	Key partners	Barriers to joint work	Ways of improving joint working	Common systems
Fuel company	Outreach. Literature in different languages. Language line.	Refer to BEC service (Eaga)	Not an issue	Monitor clients referred to EEC & for BECs. Followed up clients in past but not now. Monitor FP (GIS).	A: right B: right C: right (guess) D: wrong	Trigger training arrangement with Care Direct	Eaga refers on to WF. Refer back some for EEC.	Supplier's charitable Trust. CAB (fund benefits and EE adviser). Eaga. CSEP.	Need for Govt input to provide holistic advice service.	More central role from Govt. Need for one telephone number for all advice. Need for central DB of all clients advised by different providers.	None

Organisation	Hard to reach	Benefits advice	Funding	Monitoring	Level of awareness ²	Awareness training in benefits?	Follow up clients referred for IM advice?	Key partners	Barriers to joint work	Ways of improving joint working	Common systems
EEAC	Literature in different languages. Home visits. Access to disability service.	Eaga's BEC service, CAB, Pension Service.	Would like funding for more home visits, outreach & follow-up work.	Do not monitor impact of advice since no follow-up. Not required to monitor referrals to schemes.	A: DLA & AA (only AA) B: right C: DK D: DK	No systematic training. Would like EST to fund awareness training.	No; may set up system in future (but not funded to do this)	LAs CAB (limited home visit service) EST PCT	Lack of funding. Some clients do not want to use telephone.	Core funding for CABx and cross referral systems. Get clients' prior consent to pass on info to other agencies. Better signposting.	None
EEAC	Literature in different languages (only WF). Home visits.	Care Direct & Eaga's BEC service.	Would like longer term funding.	Do not monitor impact of advice since no follow-up. Not required to monitor referrals to schemes.	A: right B: right C: DK D: DK	No systematic training.	No: clients referred for BEC asked to call back if claim successful.	EST LAs Care Direct	Staff couldn't provide benefits and EE advice. No. of organisations	Better signposting arrangements. Recognition that EEACs need to do more to optimise opportunities for clients. Need for consistent approach throughout UK.	None

¹ A: Where is most heat lost in an un-insulated house? Is it walls, draughts, roof? (*walls*)

B: If you receive Pension Credit, how much of a grant could you be entitled to for EE measures? Is it: up to £700, up to £1750, up to £2,700? (*up to £2,700*)

C: Do you know the names of any EE grant schemes? (*Warm Front, EEC, LA etc*)

D: What is the definition of fuel poverty? (*need to spend >10% of income on fuel*)

E: How many households currently live in fuel poverty? (*any answer between 1 & 2m accepted*)

Equivalent questions were asked for Scotland and Wales.

² A: What benefits may a client be entitled to if over 65 and have care needs? (*Attendance Allowance*)

B: Is receipt of Attendance Allowance dependent on: amount of income, amount of savings, care needs only (*care needs only*)

C: What is the Income Support rate for a single adult over 25 with no other needs? Is it: £56, £90, £109? (*£56*)

D: What is the basic Pension Credit rate for a pensioner with no savings or other income? Is it: £56, £90, £109 (*£109*)

APPENDIX 3: STRATEGIC INTERVIEW RESULTS

Orga nisati on	Barriers to integration	Overcoming barriers	Monitoring impact	IM advice & FP programmes	Role of DWP	Role of fuel companies	Role of local government	Relationship: telephone & F2F
FPAG	Expertise to give both sets of advice. Complexity of benefit system. Some LAs & advice centres resistant to working with fuel companies.	Need for basic awareness on both sides. Build up relationships and local partnerships.	Some companies need to monitor & follow up BECs better.	Allow 5% of EEC for BECs? Offer BECs to all WF clients.	JCP should set up same relationship with Eaga as Pension Service. Reform Fuel Direct. Resolve problems with tax credits.	Can play a role but only up to a point.	Build up local partnerships between sectors. Most LAs not are coordinating, although a few are.	Eaga shows phone systems can work. Disability benefits best done F2F.
EST	Lack of awareness. Lack of willingness and tools, e.g. databases. Need for EST guidance. EEAC emphasis on carbon, not FP.	Requires good management & prioritisation. Build up referral networks and relationships at local level.	Don't monitor referrals to WF/priority EEC. Will improve with SENs: move to outcome monitoring.	No comment.	Don't know	Don't know.	Not sure of role as a whole since different LAs vary so much.	Need to get right balance between 2 approaches.
Defra	Tensions between orgs. Could CABx carry out more advice if they streamlined certain aspects of service?	Potential to replicate Eaga/ Pension Service link with other orgs. JCP should set up similar arrangement with Eaga as Pension Service.	Would like more feedback from CABx. If EEACs can give feedback on WF referrals, should do it. Need more feedback on impact of EE advice.	Considering BECs for all WF clients - could run pilots. DWP could help fund?	Play a role in expanding BEC service, including JCP, if service is to be expanded.	All companies now doing BECs. Could take standardised approach to monitoring.	LAs could bring together different advice services. May need central steer.	Two could learn from each other. Eaga BEC service is good for dealing with high volumes.
WAG	Resistance within WR sector to EE sector getting involved. CAB won't cooperate with Eaga because of lack of funding; think they are better at providing advice. Split between devolved and non-devolved responsibilities - don't have strong relationship with DWP.	Need better understanding between 2 sectors. WZs, Warmer Wales have shown potential for integration. Simplify benefits system. Political will to integrate systems.	Would like more feedback from Eaga on actual claims resulting from BECs. EST doesn't monitor % of clients that are low income. EEACS don't monitor HEES referrals.	Could do more follow up of BECs, create stronger links with specialist agencies.	Need for stronger links between WAG and DWP. Some discussions with JCP about HEES awareness. WAG want to map all advice provided to pensioners in their homes.	People will only trust suppliers when part of partnership, e.g. Warmer Wales. Better links between PSR and IM advice?	Most LAs in Wales have WR service - could help more with integration.	Need for better links between Eaga service and local IM advice providers.

Orga nisati on	Barriers to integration	Overcoming barriers	Monitoring impact	IM advice & FP programmes	Role of DWP	Role of fuel companies	Role of local government	Relationship: telephone & F2F
SE	Lack of resources at advice centre level to make links, build networks, set up cross referral mechanisms. Important that advice is independent: people don't trust Govt agencies.	LAs could coordinate as part of AWS. SE could encourage EEACs to cross refer. Financial exclusion fund could help resource new systems.	Would like more feedback from Eaga on actual claims. Common monitoring system (MATRICS) for IM advice could also include EE and FP.	Considering offering BECs at start of process, not at end and to WD clients.	Should routinely check whether claimants getting right benefits. Personal advisers at JCP could help ensure people get benefits. Benefit system needs simplifying.	BECs are not fuel companies' area of expertise. Better to fund independent advice.	Coordinate advice as part of AWS. SE doesn't give guidance on AWS, although EAS has advised Communities Scotland area officers.	Considering moving from telephone to F2F. People more relaxed, advisers can pick up non-verbal clues.
BGT	Govt presents main barriers, e.g. no link between JCP & Homeheat., DWP should provide benefit data to range of agencies.	Govt should provide set of rules and targets.	Suppliers might monitor impact of EE advice if credited within EEC.	Should offer BECs to all WF claimants.	JCP should set up same relationship with Eaga as Pension Service.	Suppliers provide BECs as part of CSR. Shouldn't be compulsory.	Could use local intelligence a lot more to tackle FP.	Homeheat has some links to CAB - could be better.
NEA	WR must be done properly, otherwise people put off claiming in future. WR sector is already over-subscribed.	More resources needed for IM advice.	Claims for BECs are over-optimistic. EEACs should monitor WF/EEC referrals.	BECs in WF have to be done if nobody else doing it.	DWP should have PSA around contribution of benefits take up to FP reduction. Include FP within Link-Age.	EEC shouldn't be spent on BECs. Should fund independent advice, c.f. Charitable Trusts.	Could do more to coordinate: many provide both WR and EE advice.	Telephone service can help screen need and pass on to F2F.
Eaga	CABx not taking Eaga referrals in Wales. Difficulty of training staff and keeping up to date, when dispersed in different locations.	Need to recognise telephone services can complement F2F services can complement each other.	Follow up all WF BEC cases and sample of other BECs. Also, 6 mth benchmarking exercise.	DWP could do more to fund, e.g. BECs to all WF cases.	Set up similar arrangement with JCP & Inland Revenue as have with Pension Service.	EEC should be spent on BECs but through Ofgem, not suppliers.	Could do more to coordinate take-up of benefits administered by LAs with DWP benefits.	Too much of an adversarial role between CAB & Eaga. Refer people needing F2F & appeals to CAB.
Pension Service	Need more integrated services at local level. Need for local FP champions.	Link-Age Plus: integrate services for pensioners at local level. Commitment and will more important than resources.	Know impact of advice since also administer benefits.	Should try to offer advice wherever possible.	JCP are considering setting up similar arrangement with Eaga as Pension Service has.	Welcome homeheat: need to increase volumes.	Most good practice exists at local level. ODPM could play more of a role.	Pension Service provides both; recognises need for home visits.

Orga nisati on	Barriers to integration	Overcoming barriers	Monitoring impact	IM advice & FP programmes	Role of DWP	Role of fuel companies	Role of local government	Relationship: telephone & F2F
Citizens Advice	Lack of resources, financial stability and trained advisers. JCP no longer keep claim forms or help people fill them in. Bundling managing agent role with BEC role isn't VFM. CAB would like to set up centralised telephone line but lack resources.	CAB: corporate access strategy - improve access to clients. Introducing triage access strategy. Some CAB - joint telephony system. £1-2m investment would make a big difference to CAB.	Make sure clients get full advice package (not just benefits). All clients followed up. CASE. MORI survey.	IM should be central to FPS: cheapest form of intervention. Current BEC service is not maximising benefit take-up; just enough to get people onto WF.	Provide better services, become more accessible, encourage take-up. JCP moving in the opposite direction. Should pay benefits quicker (also LAs). Should deal with appeals quicker.	Fuel companies should fund independent advice provision, not BECs. Should stop over-estimating DD bills. Should help people move off ppm to cheaper payment methods.	Could help with local coordination but would require good business case. Govt could incentivise.	Telephone service doesn't work for 'hard to reach'; only suitable for LHF. Funding equity between 2 methods. Shouldn't refer clients on to CAB without funding.
Durham WR Unit (Durham CC)	WR sector not doing enough on EE grants. More difficult to integrate when 2 tier local govt. Many LSPs are ineffectual - lack money. WR should be more mainstream in LAs. CABx need more secure funding.	LAAs may provide incentive to integrate. Counties have to lead when 2 tier. NEA should work with 2 tier council to develop model. CLS reform of advice services?	No feedback from Pension Service on outcomes of advice (used to). Ward breakdowns of benefit take-up resulting from advice.	Hope that EST North East will encourage more WR work since leads to increased EE grant take-up and improved health.	JCP have retreated into call centres - not working. DWP has access to info that other agencies don't have, e.g. client age.	Should fund independent advice centres.	Central Govt should send clear FP message to LAs, backed up with resources. Integrate advice within customer management systems.	F2F more likely to lead to positive outcomes: more personal.
Devon Care Direct	WR sector expected to take on many new issues, e.g. community banking, as well as EE. Problem of geographical spread in Devon. Communication about different initiatives is a big problem. Need more evaluation of what works.	Telephone service: clients give consent for CD to pass on details to other agencies. Age Concern contracted to manage provision of F2F advice by local centres. Establishment of corporate contact centre will help.	Detailed monitoring: access to DWP's system. Would like access to district councils' benefit systems. Would like feedback from EEAC on WF take-up.		All benefit providers should carry out more holistic benefit checks, not just benefits they administer. Concern about JCP withdrawal of services.	Should refer customers in debt to local advice centres.	Customer contact centre, web access, mobile advice centres in rural areas. Rural energy champions.	Relationship between CD & Age Concern advocacy service works well.

APPENDIX 4: INCOME MAXIMISATION WORKSHOP: NOTES

6 March, 2006, Ofgem

Participants

Sarah Allan	Luton Council	Phillip Arend	British Gas
Pat Austin	NEA Northern Ireland	David Barnes	Ofgem
Richard Bates	energywatch	Andrew Bellamy	Eaga
Andrew Benfield	EST	Kiera Bower	Ofgem
Nicola Branch	NW London EEAC	Mark Brown	EEPfH
Rob Charlton	DEFRA	Clive Chivers	DWP
Chris Cosgrove	Swansea Council	Peter Daley	Eaga
Simon Evans	NW London EEAC	Brooke Flanagan	EST
Richard Grant	DTI	Gwyndaf Hughes	Citizens Advice Wales
Saran Jarvie	NEA	Michael King	EEPfH
Peter Matejic	DTI	Nicola McGuigan	Ofgem
Oliver Myers	Camden Council	Mary O' Brien	NEA
Jacky Pett	ACE	Jonathan Stearn	energywatch
Jo Steven	EDF Energy	Mark Watson	ERA
Mary Wise	EEPfH	Facilitators:	
		Anna Stobbs	CSE
		William Baker	CSE

Introduction

William Baker explained that the workshop formed part of a wider research programme into how income maximisation advice could be better integrated with fuel poverty services. CSE was commissioned by the Energy Efficiency Partnership for Homes Fuel Poverty Strategy Group to carry out the research. Traditionally, fuel poverty policy has focused on energy efficiency measures. However, there is a growing recognition that income maximisation advice also has a critical role to play, due to its 'double whammy' effect:

- the increased income resulting from extra benefits reduces fuel poverty
- receipt of benefits will often provide a passport to Warm Front, priority EEC or HEES measures which further reduce fuel poverty.

Most of the main efficiency grant programmes in each country (Warm Front, HEES and central heating initiative) therefore now offer benefit entitlement checks as a core element. The exceptions are the Warm Deal scheme in Scotland and the Warm Homes Scheme in Northern Ireland.

The overall research programme involves seven stages:

- Review of IM and EE advice sectors
- Produce case studies of exemplar integrated schemes
- Strategic interviews
- Operational interviews
- Workshop
- Analysis
- Final report with recommendations

Many of the workshop participants will have been interviewed by CSE for the strategic or operational interviews and/or the case studies. The interviews identified a number of barriers and opportunities for improved integration. It was hoped that the workshop will play a valuable role in helping to address these.

It was explained that integration did not necessarily mean energy efficiency advice and income maximisation advice providers becoming specialists in each others' fields. It was more about increasing awareness, creating networks, establishing cross referral systems and finding ways of closer working between the two advice sectors. The research will aim to develop options for better integration, the purpose of which will be to provide an improved service to clients and more effectively reduce fuel poverty.

The main part of the workshop was taken up with four 'break-out' sessions. These were based on the key themes identified through the interviews and scheme review. Briefing notes were produced for each session, based on the scheme review and interview results. Participants were asked to address 3/4 questions during each session. The following notes represent views expressed by workshop participants.

Notes from break-out sessions

1: Overview of income maximisation (IM) and energy efficiency (EE) advice sectors

- Increased monitoring has resource implications
- There is a need for greater clarity about what to monitor
- It is important to recognise the relationship between targets and monitoring
- Should the local authority have a role in encouraging monitoring?
- Every local authority area needs more face to face IM advice and home visiting capacity. Telephone advice alone is not enough, especially for vulnerable clients.
- CABx: follow up all clients advised. Citizens Advice has a detailed client information system which it uses extensively for monitoring impact and advocacy/policy.
- EEACs: little follow-up of clients advised. EST carries out national sample survey on impact of advice and regular mystery shopping exercises to check accuracy of advice
- Potential to make greater use SENSE system (database of EEAC client information)?
- EEAC role in combating fuel poverty:
 - Eaga sees big variations in extent to which EEACs refer to Warm Front
 - Doesn't consider EEACs are providing a service to the fuel poor
 - Perhaps this is inevitable, given EEAC emphasis on carbon saving
- CABx role in Warm Front/HEES take-up:
 - Traditionally not a priority
 - Advisors need more time with clients to ensure they can make an informed choice. Advice on grants and who to contact next was estimated to extend the standard advice session by 10 minutes and would therefore need funding
 - If CAB did prioritise Warm Front/HEES take-up, they would generate large numbers of extra referrals, requiring considerable follow-up work.

- Would Welsh Assembly have sufficient resources to meet the demand for HEES that CABx could potentially create?
- If ‘get a foot through the door’, should aim to provide a full advice service: IM, housing, EE, grant eligibility etc

2. Telephone and face to face advice

- Particular need to improve provision for working age households
 - 28% of FP in NI are working households, i.e. low waged
 - Job Centre Plus emphasis on getting people into work could be exacerbating fuel poverty
 - People are not getting benefits they are entitled to, both in pre-work period and while in-work (tax credits etc)
- Concerns over local variations in service provided by Job Centres Plus and Pension Service
- Value of independent advice provision:
 - people distrust statutory services
 - even more suspicious of fuel companies
- The quality of IM advice is similar for both telephone and face to face services, although face to face is generally more suitable for vulnerable clients.
- Accuracy of advice provided critically depends on information provided by clients:
 - Equally true of both telephone and face to face services
 - However, it is easier to build up trust, get all the information required, interpret body language etc with face to face services.
- Relationship between Eaga Benefit Entitlement Check (BEC) service and local advice providers:
 - Need to link up
 - Central government should recognise that BEC service is increasing demand for local face to face services: should provide resources to local agencies to meet this
- Move to join up local services:
 - Pension Service, Housing, Social Services, energy efficiency, IM advice
 - Reluctance to share budgets – probably unreasonable to expect this
 - Requires local organisation to coordinate and form partnerships with both statutory and voluntary bodies: perhaps a local authority role?
 - Signposting mechanisms and cross referral systems are key
 - Needs to address gaps in the social housing sector
 - Monitoring and feedback from front line workers must feed into policy and strategy development

3. National responsibilities

- How can programmes be brought together?
 - Ideally, would start with clean sheet
 - However, not feasible: have to work with existing programmes & structures
- Greater emphasis on outcome targets might help bring about change
- Should prioritise measures that have the greatest impact on fuel poverty: would lead to greater emphasis on IM advice within fuel poverty strategy
- Need to recognise that fuel poverty is primarily about people, rather than properties
- National developments that might help:

- Financial inclusion fund: potentially increased funds for debt advice
- Mervyn Kohler's proposals on how to engage the voluntary sector
- At which level should integration take place?
 - Government sets policy and goals
 - Regions: key responsibility for integrating services
 - Local: delivery of services
- Potential regional role:
 - Help integrate EEC & Warm Front
 - Strategic overview of advice sectors: ensure advice provision meets needs (better placed to do this than local authorities?), provide mechanisms for integration
 - Bring in health (particularly with new regional health authorities)
 - Contradiction that RDAs have targets to decrease benefits claimed in region
- Improved integration is still required at national level, e.g.:
 - DWP should have a fuel poverty PSA
 - Home Office should be more involved, given 'Active Communities' responsibility
 - ODPM should be more involved, given regeneration and local and regional government responsibilities
- Integration requires resources:
 - Prioritise areas with high levels of fuel poverty (c.f. CSE small area fuel poverty indicator)
 - Roll-out Warm Zone-type models
- DTI invited participants to make case for IM and integration when responding to the Energy Review consultation

4. Local responsibilities

- Possible opportunities within HECA:
 - Requirement to produce fuel poverty report
 - Big differences between local authorities
 - Need for dedicated (full time) HECA officer with clearly defined responsibilities
- Need for local fuel poverty champion within local authorities: identified and funded in order to co-ordinate programmes, should be a full-time role
- Local authority role:
 - Coordinate all organisations that meet clients face to face, e.g. police, Age Concern, Social Services, Health services, advice sector etc
 - Establish cross referral mechanisms, with assisted referrals for vulnerable clients
 - Provide training/awareness of issues, e.g. how FP affects different organisations, how reducing fuel poverty helps them meet their agendas, practical tips on how to recognise fuel poverty and help individuals
 - Shouldn't necessarily provide training themselves, but should co-ordinate other organisations to provide reciprocal training for each other
 - Importance of Affordable Warmth Strategies
 - Put pressure on local companies to exercise 'corporate responsibility'
 - Make sure there is a proper balance between EE and fuel poverty strategies
- Central Government should place requirement on local authorities to reduce fuel poverty:

- HECA isn't enough
- Need for long term funding for rolling out programmes and implementation (currently only fund feasibility studies and pilots)
- Provide both frameworks and targets that local authorities have to work to – shouldn't be optional
- Provide guidance on monitoring and accountability mechanisms
- Spread best practice from local authorities that are doing well to all local authorities

Conclusion

William Baker thanked participants for their thoughtful contributions to the workshop. The discussions should form a valuable element of the final report.

Feedback from participants suggested that the workshop provided a useful opportunity to discuss the potential for integrating income maximisation advice into fuel poverty services. Many felt that they learnt a lot from the session and would take this back to their organisations to help inform future practice. A number of participants said that that they would have liked longer to discuss the many issues involved.

Ofgem was thanked for its help with the workshop organisation, particularly with respect to providing a venue and refreshments.

APPENDIX 5: CASE STUDIES

1. Camden London Borough Council Affordable Warmth Strategy

Introduction

Camden's affordable warmth strategy, "Warmth for All" was launched in 2000. Warmth for All is a partnership between London Borough of Camden and other local agencies such as the North & West London Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (NWLEEAC), Camden Primary Care Trust, Camden Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern and a number of community groups that are best placed to help identify potential beneficiaries, i.e. those deemed vulnerable (older householders, families with children and those who have disabilities or a long term illness).

Building on earlier attempts to develop affordable warmth referral networks, in 2004 the WISH (Warmth, Income, Safety and Health) Referral Scheme was set up with Health Action Zone funding. WISH offers a single referral route for frontline staff who are concerned about someone but not sure which service can help. WISH trains and enables health, housing and care staff to refer their clients to a central information point, where information is processed, referrals are made to the relevant agency and outcomes are tracked. WISH is thereby well placed to offer a holistic service to vulnerable residents.

For physical health problems, clients are referred to the Camden PCT Reach Team, which provides medical screening, medication reviews for fallers, falls prevention measures, supported discharge from hospital and rehabilitation, and retraining in daily skills. For home adaptations, clients are referred to the Council Home Safety Team (small adaptations), or Occupational Therapy Services (specialist adaptations).

For energy efficiency advice and grants for heating and insulation, clients are referred to Camden's freephone *Warmth for All* helpline. For safety and security measures, clients are referred to the Safe as Houses project (safety measures), London Fire Brigade (fire safety measures), Metropolitan Police (security advice). For home repairs, clients are referred to Environmental Health (major repairs for private tenants, homeowners), the Mobile Repair Service (minor repairs).

For help in getting benefits, managing income and debt, or help accessing social activities, counseling or advocacy, clients are referred to the Camden Older People Outreach Service, Welfare Rights Team, Age Concern, Citizen Advice Bureau or Disability in Camden, depending on the nature of their need, their age and housing tenure.

Aims:

The "Warmth for All" Partnership aims to work towards ending fuel poverty for vulnerable householders in Camden by 2010 and for all householders by 2016.

Objectives:

- To ensure the continuing implementation, monitoring and review of the affordable warmth strategy.

- To raise the profile of energy awareness among Camden staff and other organisations in the borough.
- To provide an effective energy efficiency advice service that reaches the most vulnerable and socially excluded members of the community.
- To improve the energy efficiency of the Council's own housing stock so that it is capable of delivering affordable warmth.
- To encourage and assist affordable warmth programmes in the private sector and housing association properties.
- To promote benefit awareness and take up with the aim of maximising the income of vulnerable and socially excluded residents.
- To take advantage of the competitive fuel supply market on behalf of low-income consumers.

Implementation

The "Warmth for All" scheme is centred on a free phone number which is operated by the North and West London Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. As well as providing advice on saving energy, keeping homes warm and dry and changing fuel supplier, the helpline acts as a gateway to other agencies and organisations including:

- London Borough of Camden, who provide energy efficiency measures for Council tenants and energy efficiency grants for home owners and private tenants;
- Eaga, who manage the Government's Warm Front scheme, the Council's Warm Front top-up scheme and offer benefit entitlement checks for callers who are either owner occupiers or private tenants and
- Camden Citizens Advice Bureau, who offer full benefit advice.

A range of campaign & promotional materials have been developed including leaflets on 'changing your fuel supplier' and 'keeping your home warm and dry', thermometer cards and 6 monthly editions of 'Warmth for All News'. Information Points in libraries and GP surgeries are stocked with leaflets and information and direct mail is sent to vulnerable groups. Outreach events are also held to publicise the scheme.

Clients give their permission when referred to be contacted by other organisations involved in the scheme to overcome issues relating to data protection.

All frontline staff in the North & West London Energy Efficiency Advice Centre receive the City & Guild Energy Awareness training and refresher sessions when appropriate. The "Warmth for All" scheme offers benefit awareness training for frontline staff.

Monitoring

The "Warmth for All" scheme was reviewed in November 2004 which highlighted key challenges for the future:

- Problems with definition – disagreement over the most appropriate definition of fuel poverty; recognition that fuel poverty is a shifting target, i.e. people move into and out of fuel poverty.
- Increasing fuel prices
- The 'hard to find' – socially excluded and vulnerable residents

- The 'hard to reach' – flats in blocks above two storeys are currently overlooked by private sector Energy Efficiency Commitment funded schemes.
- The 'hard to treat' – for instance solid-walled properties.
- Difficulties in guaranteeing the provision of affordable warmth following interventions – most programmes do not offer a holistic package for lifting households out of fuel poverty.
- Difficulties with eligibility issues – for instance between 40 – 70% of households eligible for Warm Front may not be fuel poor, while 35 – 40% of fuel poor households are not eligible for Warm Front (NAO 2003).
- The need to find cost effective ways of measuring qualitative outcomes for "Warmth for All" interventions rather than just counting outputs.
- How to improve the ratio between the number of workers trained in energy awareness and the number of clients referred to/calling the helpline.
- Increasing referrals made by frontline practitioners.
- Large private rented sector with fluid movement and where landlords have often refused to give permission for heating and insulations works.

Lessons Learnt

- The value of providing one central phone-line for accessing all forms of advice.
- The importance of providing a full advice package if fuel poverty and other objectives are to be effectively met.
- "You can be the victim of your own success with not having enough staff and funds to carry out the number of referrals made through the WISH referral system." (Simon Evans, Manager of NWL EEAC, 2006)
- The difficulty of reaching the most isolated residents, who often live in the worst cold and damp homes in the borough.

Successes

- The number of 'fuel poor' households in Camden has declined significantly over the past 5 years; it is believed "Warmth for All" has made a significant contribution to this.
- The award of the Beacon Council status for tackling fuel poverty gained in 2003 recognised the impact the scheme was having on tackling fuel poverty in Camden.

Between January 2001 and September 2005, the "Warmth for All" scheme:

- Trained 1225 council staff, health and care practitioners, voluntary sector staff and community group representatives in energy awareness sessions
- Received 1781 calls (from 1644 different callers) via the "Warmth for All" helpline.
- 9974 energy efficiency measures were installed in council-owned stock.
- Improvement in average SAP rating of council-owned stock from SAP 57 to SAP 66
- 863 grants completed (in all tenures) for heating and/or insulation works, totalling £1.2 million.
- Increase in the average number of private sector energy efficiency grants per year from 10 – 140 per annum since launch of "Warmth for All".
- 14,000 Energy Efficiency light bulbs and appliances distributed
- 393 people referred by the helpline for benefits/money matters advice.

- In 2004-05 alone the council and voluntary as a whole helped older people gain £1.2 million in extra benefits.

The overall success of the scheme will inevitably rely on the effectiveness of national energy efficiency programmes and government strategies for combating fuel poverty generally, as well as the movement of fuel prices.

2. Care Direct Devon

Introduction

Care Direct Devon was set up in November 2001 as part of the Department of Health's pilot Care Direct initiative. The initiative is hosted by Devon County Council Social Services Department. Five other pilots were also established in the South West, each adopting a slightly different approach. Care Direct Devon is a multi-agency information and advice service for older people and their carers. A telephone-based advice service represents the core element of the service. It was originally intended to roll the scheme out nationally after the pilot phase, although this now appears unlikely.

Care Direct clients are given information about Social Services and other care providers and advice on money, benefits, housing circumstances and keeping well.

Aims

- Care Direct aims to make life easier for older people by making information and help available when they need it.
- Care Direct aims to offer a benefit check to every caller, where appropriate, to make sure they are claiming all that are entitled to. It is estimated that there are millions of pounds of unclaimed benefit in Devon.

Implementation

The DWP took over the management of the service from DOH in 2004 as part of its promotion of the concept of a Third Age service. It aims to provide a more holistic approach to benefit take up, recognising the links between income maximisation, social care and health. On completion of Care Direct Devon's pilot stage, the service was absorbed into Devon County Council's Corporate Customer Services Centre. Care Direct has strong partnerships with Social Services, local Primary Care Trusts, Department of Work and Pensions, District Councils, Age Concern Devon and other local voluntary groups.

Care Direct Devon utilises the LAGAN client management system. This allows referrals to be sent direct to Social Services via email. The system is being developed to enable the service to refer direct to other partnership agencies, e.g. Care and Repair, Devon EEAC and Age Concern.

Clients phoning the service hear a pre-recorded message that informs the caller that information supplied will be shared with Care DirecTV's partner agencies. By continuing with the call, clients give their consent to the sharing of information

supplied. Once connected, Care Direct advisors identify clients' needs for services. Referrals are sent via email to internal agencies and by fax to external agencies.

Care Direct works closely with many partner agencies, including the Devon EEAC, Age Concern Devon and Devon FAB team (financial and benefits advice). Care Direct advisors carry out the initial benefits check then refer on to the EEAC for specialist energy advice, if required. Alternatively, Care Direct advisors may refer clients direct to Warm Front or Heat Devon (which runs a discount energy efficiency scheme for people not on benefits).

If clients are identified as requiring social care, referrals will be sent directly to Social Services, who in turn will refer to the FAB team in order to determine the charge for the required services. The FAB partnership is coordinated by Devon Welfare Rights Unit and works with CAB and DWP to provide a home visiting service to assess clients' ability to pay for services. During the home visit clients are offered a benefit check in order to maximise their income. Care Direct callers that are already in receipt of Social Services care or who do not require help from Social Services are also offered a benefits check. These callers can be referred to Age Concern Devon, who utilise a number of local, voluntary providers for face to face advocacy and help with filling in benefit forms. If the need to appeal against a DWP decision arises, callers are referred to the CAB.

The decision to incorporate Care Direct Devon into the County Council's new Corporate Customer Services Centre (see glossary) aims to make sure that advice forms an integral element of the new system.

The Care Direct Devon Project Officer is one of four Devon rural energy champions. The scheme is funded by NEA. Rural energy champions are given "City and Guilds, Energy Awareness" training and provide signposting and information with regards to energy efficiency, affordable warmth, national and local grant schemes and 'no cost and low cost' energy efficiency measures. Each of the champions incorporates this work into their existing roles. The scheme aims to target 'hard to reach' clients that may have young families, disabilities or are older members of the community. This is achieved by a number of methods which include outreach with local community organisations in remote rural areas.

Monitoring

- Care Direct Devon is able to carry out detailed monitoring of claim outcomes since four of its advisors have been seconded from the DWP. Advisers have access to the DWP Remote Access Terminal (RAT), the DWP database which allows them to track progress on individual claims.
- From August 2005, Care Direct has started following up clients who were sent benefit application forms but did not return them. It is hoped this will help increase the number of successful claims.
- As part of a DWP Partnership Fund initiative, Care Direct are working with district nurses to encourage them to use the Care Direct service to refer patients for a benefit check. Annual feedback is provided to nurses on the amount of extra benefits they have helped clients gain through using the service.

Lessons learned

- By incorporating follow-up advice into the programme, clients are provided maximum support and opportunity in obtaining the benefits they are entitled to.
- The ability of Care Direct to share client information with partner agencies through use of a pre-recorded consent message is an important feature of the initiative.
- Many projects fail to take stock and evaluate successes and failures. Care Direct Devon, working with DWP, has addressed this by building in an evaluation process from the outset.
- It is important that projects continue to sustain and develop partnership working.
- The provision of feedback to referral agents is a good motivator for ensuring their continued involvement in the scheme.

Successes

Care Direct Devon has advised 12,000 clients, leading to 4,500 confirmed successful claims for benefits. In the 4 years since the project started, the total value of extra benefits claimed now stands at approximately £9 million.

3. Luton Council Affordable Warmth Referral Scheme

Introduction

Luton's Affordable Warmth Strategy was launched in 1998 to help address the social and health problems caused by fuel poverty in Luton. It was designed to identify those at risk from fuel poverty and put them in touch with the correct organisation to address their problems.

The strategy was developed by Luton Borough Council, Health Action Zone, NEA, Luton Citizen's Advice Bureau, representatives from the health sector and voluntary organisations and members of the community. Funding was received from the Health Action Zone to develop the strategy since the Strategy aims to address the health issues presented by fuel poverty.

Aims and Targets

Luton Borough Council adopted a Vision 2010 statement which describes the quality of life it expects Luton's citizens to achieve by 2010. These goals include:

- Deprivation: all wards in Luton to improve, and no ward in Luton to be within the 10% most deprived wards in England.
- Health improvement: halve the gap between life expectancy of people in Luton and the rest of the country; bring death rate for babies in Luton down to the national average.

Objectives:

- To raise the profile of energy awareness among Luton Borough Council staff and other organisations in the Borough
- To train key staff to NEA City & Guilds 6176 Energy Awareness level.

- To set up permanent information points in GP surgeries, community Centre's, Day centres and Job Centres.
- To implement the affordable warmth strategy within Luton Borough Council's own housing stock and to establish an energy profile for housing stock.
- To encourage and assist affordable warmth programmes in private sector and housing association properties.
- To provide presentations to private sector Landlords Forum
- To ensure energy efficiency advice is given following installation of new energy efficiency measures and to provide information and advice on controls if necessary.
- To take advantage of the competitive fuel supply market on behalf of low-income consumers

Implementation

A steering group was set up consisting of representatives from the Council, voluntary sector and health authority to improve energy efficiency and maximise incomes.

A series of workshops were carried out to agree the main aims and objectives of the Strategy and set targets and timescales for the strategy's implementation. The Strategy has placed particular emphasis on addressing the whole community and involving the voluntary sector, community groups and health authority in its implementation.

The affordable warmth referral scheme was produced directly from the strategy. It is designed for people who work with households at risk of fuel poverty to provide a fast track system to referrals for help. Help includes benefits advice, Social Services support and installation of measures through the Government's Warm Front scheme.

Referrers include front line workers from the Council, voluntary sector and health sector.

The referral scheme offers:

- Help for people to maximise their income or reduce debts so fuel bills are more affordable
- Help for people to take advantage of free government grants to insulate their homes or make their heating systems more efficient.
- A discount scheme for householders who are not eligible for government grants
- Communication for householders for up to date energy efficiency offers.
- Talks on energy efficiency to groups of people
- Promotion of independence for older people by ensuring they can access community and Social Services resources
- 'Trigger Training' for front line staff of all agencies involved in the scheme to identify potential problems linked with fuel poverty and how to take action.
- All referral agents use a single referral form (available in paper and electronic formats) to assess people's needs for help. Luton Council coordinates provision of help from the specialist agencies using the information recorded.

Specific partnerships were built with Luton Citizens Advice Bureau, Warm Front and Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service to deliver assistance through the referral scheme.

A single database holds details of all people that have been involved in the partnership which is used to distribute information and updates. Training has been delivered to over 300 people in partner organisations and continues to be provided as new staff come into the scheme.

Monitoring

The Affordable Warmth strategy is monitored by a steering group which meets on a quarterly basis. The referral scheme working group includes Luton Borough Council, Eaga Warm Front, Luton Citizen's Advice Bureau, Working Luton, Luton PCT and Luton Against Poverty Forum. The working group meets regularly to discuss the referral process.

All clients helped under the scheme are entered onto the database which is regularly updated. Statistics are collected on source of referral; additional benefits, energy grants and 'social help' claimed; and demographic information, e.g. age and ethnicity.

Lessons Learnt

- Affordable warmth must address both energy efficiency and social issues (e.g. under-claiming of benefits, right to independent living) and all sections of the community.
- Clients' need to seek help from different agencies is minimised through the use of a single referral form.
- The establishment of the cross referral system would not have happened without the Council's input.
- Referral agents are not meant to provide specialist advice. It is important that they make clear to clients that claims for support may not always be successful.

Successes

- Since the strategy was produced, Luton has benefited from three years additional Health Action Zone Innovations funding to fast track private sector household improvements and energy efficiency measures for disabled people and those suffering from ill health.
- 300 people, mostly those working with vulnerable households in Luton, have attended energy awareness training.
- 700 people have been referred for advice and assistance through the Affordable Warmth referral scheme since April 2001.
- The scheme has successfully accessed 'hard to reach' households with 76% of recipients living in the private sector and 81% over 60 (48% over 75).
- An extra £400,000 worth of benefits has so far been claimed. This figure is constantly increasing.
- 5000 easy-to-read room thermometers have been distributed to older and vulnerable people, with an information sheet on how to keep warm and avoid hypothermia.

- £900,000 in grant aid was awarded by HAZ to be spent from 2000/01 to 2003/04 on minor housing grants targeted at health gain.
- In 2001/02 92 energy efficient kettles and 4,500 low energy light bulbs were distributed free to low income households.
- Printed advice is provided in English, Urdu, Punjabi and Bengali, and distributed by partners in the Affordable Warmth Group.
- 11 council staff and voluntary sector workers achieved the City and Guilds 6176 Energy Advice qualification.
- The Council was awarded Beacon Council status in 2002 for its innovative fuel poverty work.

Within Luton Council's housing stock the average SAP rating has also increased. In 1996 the SAP of housing stock was 50. By March 2002 it had reached 58. Each year on average:

- 900 properties receive roof insulation
- 450 properties receive cavity wall insulation
- 600 properties are double glazed
- 65 non-traditional dwellings receive external wall insulation
- 700 properties obtain new, insulated external doors
- 475 condensing or high efficiency boilers are installed

4. Newcastle Warm Zone

Introduction

Newcastle Warm Zone was established in April 2004 based on the successful Stockton and Redcar & Cleveland Warm Zones. The Newcastle Warm Zone (NWZ) is a proven, targeted and cost effective delivery mechanism. It is based on a systematic ward-by-ward approach within Newcastle's 26 wards. The approach includes:

- Awareness raising
- Assessment
- Analysis
- Surveying
- Installation of physical measures
- Delivery of benefits and energy efficiency advice
- Monitoring, reporting and ongoing improvement.

Project partners include Newcastle City Council, Your Homes Newcastle, ScottishPower, National Grid, Warm Zones Ltd and other organisations such as Newcastle PCT, the Pension Service, installers, voluntary and community organisations. The project is funded by Newcastle City Council, Your Homes Newcastle, ScottishPower, National Grid, the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

Aims

NWZ aims to reduce fuel poverty and improve domestic energy efficiency for all homes in Newcastle as far as is practicable by 2008. It aims to do this by effectively

and efficiently targeting and delivering insulation (cavity wall and loft) and central heating measures, as well as benefits and energy advice to Newcastle's 120,000 households.

The Warm Zone aims to systematically identify and aid all those in fuel poverty through an intensive, focused and collaborative programme. It brings together existing and new programmes in a coordinated manner, with the emphasis on delivery of physical (insulation and heating) and soft (benefits and energy efficiency advice) measures.

Objectives:

- To visit all 120,000 homes in Newcastle and identify fuel poverty & energy efficiency improvements.
- To install free insulation measures in all qualifying households (all Council homes, all homes in fuel poverty, all homes on qualifying benefits and those in special funding areas).
- To provide central heating support for certain households, working with Eaga and the Warm Front scheme.
- To maximise incomes, through a free and comprehensive benefits advice and claim support service.
- To deliver a well funded insulation programme for all other residents. This 'able to pay' scheme offers measures at very substantially discounted prices (effectively at cost price to the Warm Zone).
- To provide and sustain local jobs and training places.
- To deliver substantial reductions in CO₂ emissions.
- To help deliver Newcastle's Affordable Warmth Strategy.

Implementation

Focusing initially on the most deprived wards of Newcastle, the NWZ Assessment team conducts 5 minute doorstep questionnaires with householders. This allows the Warm Zone team to assess eligibility for free energy efficiency measures (or discount schemes for those able to pay) as well as the opportunity for residents to take advantage of the benefits and energy efficiency advice services.

Information is fed into the Zone's database and analysis systems. These can calculate SAP ratings, fuel property status, carbon emissions and what the entitlement is regarding free energy efficiency measures.

Free insulation measures are then provided to qualifying households, as outlined above, with non-qualifying households offered the opportunity to take advantage of the very heavily discounted "Newcastle Home Energy Savers" scheme.

Households that have indicated a desire to have a benefits entitlement check at the doorstep assessment stage are then contacted by NWZ's in-house staff and an initial entitlement review is carried out. Crucially, home visits and assistance with completing forms can be arranged if required. The team will also refer directly for any government grants or to other relevant organisations for energy efficiency measures and to other agencies that can offer benefits claim assistance (e.g. the Pension

Service). NWZ is therefore effectively operating as a “one stop shop” for energy efficiency, benefits and energy efficiency advice in Newcastle.

In addition to its own quality assurance work, a further sample of clients are later contacted to establish whether energy efficiency measures have been installed to the residents satisfaction. Similarly, all households where a potential benefits claim has been identified and actioned are contacted by NWZ to check on progress and to offer further assistance, if required.

A significant amount of local, ward-based outreach work is carried out, including community talks, presentations and community events to provide information about the Warm Zone and what it can do to help individual householders. Publicity material is printed in large print and different languages to assist all members of the community.

All project staff receive induction training provided by the project’s funding partners where applicable e.g. benefits training by the Local Authority Welfare Rights Team. Members of staff that may have more dealings with clients receive the City & Guilds 6176 Energy Awareness training. Refresher training is then provided on an adhoc basis and delivered in house by partner or external organisations.

Monitoring

The project carries out extensive follow-up work to provide accurate data for reporting. Data is reported as both confirmed results and conservative estimates of benefits gained.

Lessons Learnt

- The importance of providing a proactive and comprehensive benefits advice service, coordinated with energy efficiency measures, to ensure reductions in fuel poverty are maximised.
- The importance of employing and supporting additional welfare rights advisors, rather than relying on existing providers, to meet the demand for advice created by the Warm Zone.
- The ongoing difficulties in securing adequate funding for benefits advisors.
- The ongoing difficulties in confirming secured gains with residents.
- The offer of home visits and ongoing claim support are very important contributory factors to the success of the project.

NWZ argues that reliance on a telephone-based entitlement check service only may lead to sub-optimal performance, including: fewer claims being secured; only the ‘simpler’ claims being actioned by the resident therefore not maximising potential income gain or other welfare benefits available; the exclusion of claimants with poor literacy levels; the exclusion of some black and minority ethnic claimants without adequate English language abilities; and the overloading of other local referral agencies / organisations.

NWZ has investigated and identified many reasons why residents may miss out on or refuse benefits advice and therefore remain in fuel poverty. These reasons, often interlinked, include:

- People do not believe they are eligible
- People are reluctant to engage with complex and confusing forms and processes
- There is a lack of dedicated benefits personnel to assist with filling in forms and deal with any ongoing correspondence
- Pride / self-reliance, particularly although not exclusively amongst the elderly
- People not wishing to be means-tested (e.g. disclosing savings)
- Negative press image of benefit claimants (e.g. “scroungers”)
- Concerns over confidentiality and distrust of ‘officialdom’
- Previous negative experience (e.g. turned down for an earlier claim)
- Low levels of literacy and numeracy.

Successes

- NWZ has a proven and successful benefits advice and claims support service. Client satisfaction is very high and demand for the service remains strong.
- Significant contributions have been made to improving health, employment, neighbourhood regeneration & social inclusion by increasing household incomes and coordinating this work with the effectively delivery of energy efficiency measures and advice.
- NWZ has installed insulation and/or heating measures in over 12,000 homes in Newcastle and has delivered further energy efficiency measures and/or advice to a further 20,000 homes (to 31 March 2006).
- Around 80 European funded training, development and support places have been created by the Warm Zone in Newcastle since April 2004.
- The number of households assessed (to 31 March 2006) is 27,383 with over 40% of all households assessed requesting a benefits entitlement check.
- Over 4,600 benefit entitlement checks have been completed, leading to secured and confirmed gains of over £1.2m pa and (conservatively) estimated gains of well in excess of £1.6m pa.
- The average secured gain is around £1,800 pa, with a further £370 in back payments.

5. Newham Warm Zone

Introduction

The Newham Warm Zone was set up as a joint partnership between Newham London Borough Council and London Electricity (now EDF Energy) in 2001. The Warm Zone was one of five pilot Warm Zones set up with Government support to develop an innovative and systematic approach to combat fuel poverty. The Warm Zone team works with householders to identify a range of measures that will help reduce fuel bills. These include insulation, draft proofing and improved heating. In recognition that energy efficiency measures alone are not always sufficient to eliminate fuel poverty, the Zone follows up all households that it considers may benefit from a benefits review.

The Zone contracts out welfare rights advice to a local independent advice centre. Clients referred to the advice centre are asked to give their prior consent for referral back to the Warm Zone, if benefit claims are successful, to facilitate access to means-tested grants, e.g. Warm Front. For households in fuel poverty but not

eligible for benefits, the Warm Zone will provide energy efficiency measures through its own Warm Zone Grant.

Aims

An estimated 24,000 homes in Newham are in fuel poverty. The Warm Zone pilot aimed to significantly reduce fuel poverty in Newham by making homes more energy efficient and maximising incomes. Although the pilot period finished in 2004, the Warm Zone continued to carry out its work in Newham and subsequently expanded to 7 neighbouring local authority areas to form the East London Warm Zone.

Implementation

The Newham Warm Zone Assessment Team conduct door-to-door visits throughout the borough working directly with householders to identify a range of measures required to help reduce their energy bills.

The Newham Warm Zone also coordinates other help, including benefits advice and home security. If a householder is identified as requiring benefits advice, the Assessment Team will make a referral, with the householder's permission, to a local independent advice provider. The Zone changed providers to carry out this function when it expanded to form the East London Warm Zone. The advice centre contacts the householder direct to carry out a full benefits check. They will refer the householder back to the Warm Zone if appropriate benefits are awarded for referral on to Warm Front or other grant schemes.

Monitoring

The Zone maintains a database of all householders helped by the Zone. This records data on both energy efficiency measures and income change resulting from benefits advice. Assessment teams also collect SAP and income data, enabling them to identify households' fuel poverty status. The Zone reports progress on its programme to EDF Energy and Newham Borough Council on a monthly basis.

Lessons learned

- The Zone recognised that there was substantial demand for benefits advice in Newham (one of London's most deprived boroughs). It has met the demand created by the Zone by paying for a local, independent advice provider to provide advice to householders assessed by the Zone as requiring it.
- Door to door assessment is seen as a more effective method of accessing vulnerable households than the self-referral systems used by other programmes.
- The Zone dealt with data protection issues by obtaining householders' prior consent for the advice centre to refer householders back to the Zone to refer on to Warm Front and other energy efficiency grant programmes.
- The Zone has identified many fuel poor households not eligible for Warm Front. It has addressed this 'fuel poverty gap' by setting up its own Warm Zone Grant. This is joint funded by Newham Council and EDF Energy.

Successes

- £500,000 was allocated to the Warm Zone Grant. This provides energy efficiency measures to families who are fuel poor but ineligible for Warm Front or priority EEC.
- The Warm Zone has assessed over 68,500 homes, created 27 jobs for the local long-term unemployed and installed insulation or improved heating in over 12,000 of the borough's homes.
- The Warm Zone has facilitated the installation of twice as many Warm Front grants as the average London Borough.
- The Zone estimates that the average increase in benefit take-up resulting from its work is £1,000/ household. £500,000 worth of extra benefits have been claimed since 2001.
- The Zone has expanded into 7 local authority areas to form the East London Warm Zone, with support from the respective local authorities, the Government Office for London and EDF Energy. EDF Energy has committed £9.5m to the Zone, £9m for energy efficiency measures and the remainder for the team's administration costs.

6. Swansea's 'Real Changes' Action Plan

Introduction

The Affordable Warmth Strategy was developed by the Council's Anti Poverty Team and members of Swansea fuel poverty action group, with support from NEA. Swansea is the first local authority in Wales to have developed a fuel poverty action plan (known as 'Real Changes').

The action plan was produced after extensive consultation with stakeholders, including the Welfare Rights Unit, Social Services, Age Concern Swansea, Community Regeneration Unit, Health Promotion Team, Energy Advice Centre, Sustainable Development Unit, 50+ Strategy Coordinator, Money Advisor, Care and Repair, Citizens Advice Bureau and the Housing Department. It is designed to act as a guide for helping groups work together to deliver affordable warmth in Swansea. The plan is still in its early stages of implementation.

In Swansea, the Housing Department's Energy Advice Centre promote and arrange individual surveys of properties. This has led to the installation of measures to approximately 7,000 of homes (all tenures) each year. The Department has secured £3 million of EU funding per annum, as well as EEC funding from suppliers, for measures.

Context

1998 figures show that 28.7% (26,000) of households in Swansea were experiencing fuel poverty (WAG (2005), *Fuel poverty in Wales*, WAG). A number of factors contribute to Swansea's high fuel poverty figures:

Low income: The latest Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that 19% of areas in Swansea feature in the most deprived 10% in Wales in terms of income. 14% (20,635) of people receive Income Support; 20% (7,656) of children are entitled to free school meals. 26% of working age adults are economically inactive (ONS (2005), *Neighbourhood Statistics*, ONS).

Health: 25% of people in Swansea have a limiting long term illness, compared with a Wales average of 23% and an England average of 18%. 44% of households in Swansea have at least one member with a limiting long term illness, compared with a Wales average of 42% and English average of 34% (ONS, 2005). Around 40% of households with a sick or disabled member are likely to be fuel poor (WAG, 2005).

Lone parent households: there are 7,106 lone parent households²⁰⁰⁴ with dependent children (ONS, 2005). Two thirds of these households are likely to be fuel poor (WAG, 2005)

Lone pensioner households: there are 14,923 households in Swansea headed by a single pensioner (ONS, 2005). 24% of those over 50s live alone in Swansea rising to 47% of those aged 85 and over. Around 6 out of 10 of these households are likely to be fuel poor (WAG, 2005).

Aims

The fuel poverty action plan aims to minimise the incidence of fuel poverty in the City and County of Swansea.

Objectives:

- To work in partnership with key stakeholders to establish a strategic and joined up approach to reducing the effects of fuel poverty in Swansea
- To raise awareness of measures and resources available to tackle fuel poverty and ensure advice reaches the most vulnerable members of our community
- To encourage all households (social landlords, private sector and CCS housing stock) to improve energy efficiency. The construction and condition of a house will affect its energy efficiency; it will cost more to heat an inefficient home. Research shows that fuel poverty can affect people regardless of whether they own their home, live in social housing or rent from a private landlord. To help households make an informed decision it is important that all homeowners and landlords are provided with up to date, specific energy advice that suits their needs.
- To resource, implement, monitor and review the fuel poverty action plan.

Implementation

The affordable warmth action plans provide a framework for action on fuel poverty at a local level. Steering groups were set up and workshops held to discuss the objectives of the plan and the issues surrounding them. The first workshop was successful in raising issues and developing outcomes. The Strategy has placed a high priority on advice and information, as well as energy efficiency. The action plan has three core objectives, the second of which is to address people's needs for advice and information. The objective is summarised below:

Objective 2:

Issues

- Clear and simple information should be made available regarding who to contact for the type of assistance required
- Ensure households are informed of key advice to stay warm and are familiar with choice of tariffs available

Anticipated outcomes

Awareness raising campaigns resulting in take-up of advice and information amongst hard to reach and vulnerable households. 'Warm and Toasty' developed as a reliable and impartial information source of information.

The action plan aims to establish an effective system for providing advice and information and responding to referrals. It also aims to form a multi-agency working group that will set up appropriate systems for benefit and energy efficiency grant take-up schemes.

Monitoring

- The action plan is developing a robust performance system for monitoring and reporting as an integral element of the plan. This will assess the scheme's progress and add value to other strategies and actions.
- The implementation of the action plan should not necessarily incur any additional costs to the Council and its partners.

Lessons Learnt

- "It is important to know who to contact, people are often referred from one organisation to another, they are asked to keep waiting, on the phone, but every penny spent on phone calls count if you are on a low income."
- "We need to ensure there is better awareness of the help that is available- my cousin had free loft insulation - it made all the difference. He found out he was entitled to access extra cash through his next door neighbour."
- "Some people are too proud to ask for help and don't accept handouts. Older people fear letting people into their homes, they also lack access to Internet services."
- "We need to educate housing providers and owner occupiers, so that they understand why it is important that we take a more proactive approach to getting proper insulation"

(Quotes from 'Real Changes', Swansea's Affordable Warmth Action Plan 2005/2008)

Successes

The benefits of bringing individuals and organisations together to develop a fuel poverty strategy are clear. It drives:

- A comprehensive, planned approach
- Builds on best practice that already exists
- Co-ordination with wider objectives and commitments
- Sets achievable goals with measurable targets and time lines

- Promotes cross-departmental and inter-agency partnership working to maximize resources and effect
- Secures commitment and ownership of the strategy from all key partners

“Real Change is a coherent plan that builds on the good work that is already happening and sets out ambitious actions that will make an even greater difference to the lives of thousands of households in Swansea. The partnership that has driven this process is to be congratulated for their efforts” Steve Cranston Director of NEA Wales

7. Eaga Partnership Benefit Entitlement Check service

Introduction

Eaga Partnership Ltd provides a telephone-based Benefit Entitlement Check (BEC) line for 4 fuel suppliers, the Warm Front scheme in England, HEES scheme in Wales and Central Heating Initiative (CHI) in Scotland.

The BEC line has two aims in England:

- to enable people to access Warm Front grants through helping them claim Warm Front passport benefits
- to help increase income for people living in properties that cannot be bought up to SAP65 and thereby reduce fuel poverty.

In Wales and in Scotland, every householder who has had a measure installed under the HEES Scheme or the CHI is automatically given a BEC.

The BEC line is funded by the Welsh Assembly, Communities Scotland, Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the four suppliers.

Aim

The BEC is an integral part of the Warm Front, HEES and CHI schemes. It helps to make sure that as many people as possible can access help. The free BEC is a telephone-based check provided to customers at times that suit them, to ensure they are claiming all the benefits they are entitled to.

Implementation

When a client makes contact via the BEC line, a BEC questionnaire is sent out to the client. They have the choice of completing this and sending it back through freepost or phoning the advisor to help complete the form on their behalf. Sometimes clients send forms back incomplete. Eaga will then call clients to help complete the form on their behalf.

Each response is then processed and the client receives an individualised report plus a letter to advise on which benefits they may be entitled to, how to claim and details of their allocated advisor. If clients prefer face to face advice, Eaga refers them to a local agency e.g. Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB).

If the client has made an application for a Warm Front grant and the BEC identifies a potential claim for benefit, Eaga will wait until the benefit claim is awarded which will ensure the measure is covered under the scheme. This closes the 'loop' and initiates the follow-up team who are in place to check claims submitted and whether or not they have been successful.

The customer can also opt for direct help from the advisor by requesting Eaga make a claim on their behalf. For example, if the client is assessed as being entitled to claim Pension Credit, the advisor will take the necessary details from the customer and make an application direct to the Pension Credit Application Line on behalf of the client. The Pension Service will contact the client to obtain any further information required and arrange for the client's signature. In the case of successful claims, the Pension Service will automatically refer the client back to Eaga to complete the Warm Front application. The client can also request a visit from a Pension Service Customer Liaison Manager if they would prefer face to face contact.

Eaga employ in-house trainers to delivering benefits awareness and energy efficiency training. This is provided to all new front line staff through a 2 week training programme. They also receive a mentoring period with experienced advisors before they take live calls.

Monitoring

- All clients that make a Warm Front claim are contacted to make sure they have acted upon the advice given. For all other schemes, a random selection of clients is called back.
- An independent researcher carries out a 6 monthly benchmark exercise, which reports on clients that have acted on advice and information given and success rates on benefit take up. Recent feedback has indicated a 75-80% success rate in terms of people acting upon the advice given. 45% of completed BECs lead to new or additional benefit entitlement.
- Eaga provide monthly reports to funders including details of BECs completed, numbers identified to be entitled to benefit and number of people claiming Warm Front.
- In England around 3,000 BEC are carried out per month. This figure is likely to increase with the increased funding announced in November 2005.
- In Scotland, Eaga targets 12,500 addresses per year and achieves a response rate of 25%. This equates to 250-300 BECs per month.
- In Wales, Eaga targets 15,000 addresses, with a response rate of 25%.

Lessons Learnt

- The telephone based service enables Eaga to deal with a high volume of clients.
- The ability to offer a BEC at the point of enquiry helps increase take-up of Warm Front.
- The automatic referral system with the Pension Service reduces client drop out rates.
- It is easier to standardise quality of training and keep up to date with changes in legislation when staff are centralised in one place.

Barriers

- Clients not providing the correct information at the initial contact. 10% of claims made are identified as not being entitled due to having further income.
- Another 10% who are identified as being entitled to claim benefit do not return the forms. Even with the follow-up team in place there are a number of applicants that do not want to continue with the claim.
- Self disqualification is a major issue with clients not believing that they are eligible to claim.
- The complexity of forms can discourage people from claiming benefit that they may be eligible for, especially Disability related benefits.
- Funding is a major issue which restricts Eaga's ability to signpost clients onto other services. For example, in Wales, Citizens Advice indicated that they could not accept referrals from Eaga because the Welsh Assembly Government was funding CABs to meet the extra demand created.

Successes

- The average increase in weekly income for clients who complete a BEC and go on to make a successful claim is £23 per week.
- A BEC in Wales highlighted a potential claim for Pension credit. The successful claim led to an £8000 backdated entitlement and an extra £50 per week income.

8. CSE/NESCAB 'Benefiting from Warmth'

Introduction

Benefiting from Warmth is an innovative advice, outreach and referral partnership project designed to increase clients' disposable incomes by increasing take-up of Pension Credit (and other related benefits) and simultaneously rendering them eligible for energy efficiency grants to make their homes warmer and cheaper to run. The project is specifically designed to target older people in rural communities in North East Somerset and Mendip.

The project, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions' Partnership Fund, is a partnership between the North East Somerset Citizens Advice Bureau (NESCAB) and the Bristol & Somerset EEAC, managed by CSE. The project began in March 2005 and will run until the end of February 2007.

Aims

- To lift older people out of fuel poverty and make life easier for older people by making information and help available when they need it
- To build a strong new partnership between two local advice providers: the Bristol & Somerset Energy EEAC and North East Somerset CAB and to engage a broad range of secondary referral partners that offer services to older people
- The project aims to have a 'double whammy' effect on fuel poverty among older people: the increase in income through a successful claim for Pension Credit will by itself reduce fuel poverty among the target group; in addition, Pension Credit is a 'passport benefit' for the Government's Warm Front grant and other means-

tested energy efficiency grants. The installation of energy efficiency measures will further reduce fuel poverty among the target group

Implementation

Reciprocal training was delivered between the EEAC and NES CAB frontline staff involved with the project on how to flag up potential clients who may be eligible for Pension Credit (and other benefits) and those eligible for energy efficiency grants. This 'trigger training' is available to other secondary referral agencies, including community hospital staff, to increase the potential for helping other clients. This training enabled staff to identify the triggers to generate a referral for the project.

A referral card is used by the two organisations to capture all the required information, including consent to contact secondary organisations. The card allows clients to specify which area they require assistance with, i.e. energy efficiency, benefits advice etc. Every client is offered a benefits check and a home energy check to assess their eligibility for benefits and for energy efficiency grants. The referral cards are distributed to other advice providers and organisations in the project area including Age Concern, local community hospitals, mobile and static libraries and community groups.

Monitoring

All referrals generated by the project are entered onto a client database based at the EEAC. This database stores information on completed and successful claims for benefits and energy efficiency grants. The database enables staff to track successful benefit outcomes, so that they can refer clients on for Warm Front grants.

A monthly activity report and statistics are provided to DWP detailing the number of people reached, the number of completed claim forms, home visits, meetings and events undertaken, as well as the number of calls received and made to clients.

Lessons learned

- By obtaining consent from the client at the beginning of the referral process, project staff can share information with partner agencies who may be able to offer assistance to the client.
- It is important to ensure secondary referral organisations are kept updated with changes to grants programmes

Successes

- The Benefiting from Warmth project has reached over 1150 people, to date. via outreach activity including events, presentations and home visits
- Over 100 referrals have been dealt with by the project team
- It is hoped that with additional funding the referral system can be replicated with other CABx in the Bristol and Somerset area. If further funding can not be secured the relationship between the two organisations will continue within a signposting remit.

GLOSSARY

Affordable Warmth

The provision of warm living conditions and other energy services for people on low incomes by ensuring their properties are well insulated, their heating systems are efficient and economical to run and their incomes are maximised, for example through welfare rights advice. The converse of fuel poverty.

Benefit entitlement checks (BEC)

These are now offered by Warm Front, HEES, CHI and all energy suppliers. The telephone-based service seeks to establish whether households may be entitled to means tested benefits, Pension Credit or tax credits due to low income and/or other household characteristics, e.g. household includes a disabled or older person. If eligibility is considered likely, the service will send the appropriate forms to clients. It will also help clients fill in forms, if requested, or use a mix of both.

Central Heating Initiative (CHI) (Scotland)

All people over 60 who own or privately rent their home and without a central heating system can claim a free central heating system. In addition, people over 80 with a partial or inefficient heating system can have a full or partial central heating system installed.

Charitable trusts

In the context of energy, charitable trusts are an initiative that started in the water industry and later spread to the energy industry. The trusts are set up on a semi-independent basis to the sponsoring fuel company and provide financial assistance to consumers of that company in arrears. Such consumers are generally referred through an advice agency and are expected to provide evidence of 'ability' to manage their personal finances in the future. Help can include debt write-off. Three fuel suppliers have set up charitable trusts: EDF Energy, Scottish Power and British Gas.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The Government defines CSR as: "how business takes account of its economic, social and environmental impacts in the way it operates – maximising the benefits and minimising the downsides. Specifically, we see CSR as the voluntary actions that business can take, over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements, to address both its own competitive interests and the interests of wider society" (extract from CSR.gov.uk website). Fuel suppliers provide BECs as part of their CSR commitment.

Customer management systems

Central government is encouraging local authorities to set up customer service/customer management systems to help improve access to local government services. Essentially, services are clustered into service groups and aim to direct 80% of all calls/visits to the required call at first point of contact with the local authority. CMS requires extensive investment in telephony, IT and staff training to ensure services are inter-connected. They also require a centralised database, telephony and IT system so that different parts of the organisation 'talk to each other'.

A number of councils, e.g. Devon and Durham, have made advice and information a core element of the new systems. The aim is to make sure people can gain full access to the services they require, including advice on benefits and energy efficiency grants. This has required making agreements with certain external agencies.

Eaga

Managing agent for Warm Front, HEES, Central Heating Initiative, Warm Deal and Warm Home Scheme. Also provides a Benefit Entitlement Check (BEC) service for four fuel suppliers and as part of Warm Front, HEES and the Central Heating Initiative.

Energy Efficiency

Making the best or most efficient use of energy in order to achieve a given output of goods or services. This does not necessarily mean the use of less energy, in which respect it differs from the concept of 'energy conservation'.

Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC)

Energy suppliers with 15,000 or more domestic customers are obliged to meet defined energy savings targets by encouraging and assisting customers to take up energy efficiency measures in their homes. At least 50% of the energy savings must come from customers receiving certain benefits or tax credits (sometimes referred to as the 'priority group' element). These customers normally receive 100% grant aid under the EEC.

Energy Efficiency Levy

The equivalent of Britain's EEC scheme, the levy applies to Northern Ireland's sole electricity supplier, Northern Ireland Electricity. 80% of the £3.8m revenue raised through the levy is directed at alleviating fuel poverty, targeting homes with no central heating or electric heating.

Energy Retail Association (ERA)

The trade association for the main domestic energy supply companies in Britain: British Gas, EDF Energy, npower, Powergen, Scottish Power and Scottish and Southern Energy. The ERA runs a 'fuel poverty helpline', referred to as 'homeheat'.

energywatch

Energywatch was established under the 2000 Utility Act as the independent watchdog for gas and electricity consumers. Energywatch takes up complaints on behalf of consumers who are experiencing difficulty in resolving problems directly with their energy suppliers, as well as advocate the interests of consumers within the regulatory system. It also provides price comparison factsheets that compare energy supplier tariffs which are updated monthly.

Fuel Direct

A fuel payment method in which the DWP pays fuel bills direct to the fuel company on behalf of Income Support recipients in debt. DWP currently regards it as a payment method 'of last resort' and is reluctant to authorise it due to its reliance on cumbersome and manual procedures.

Fuel poverty

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy defines a fuel poor household as one that needs to spend more than 10% of its income on all fuel use and to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth (defined as 21°C in the living room and 18°C in other occupied rooms, as recommended by the World Health Organisation) and meet its other energy needs (DTI & DEFRA, 2001). The definition is therefore based on 'required fuel expenditure', rather than 'actual fuel expenditure'. Required fuel expenditure is calculated through a technical evaluation of a property's thermal efficiency and heating system. The three principle causes of fuel poverty are low income, poor energy efficiency standards and high fuel prices.

The Government defines fuel poor households that include older people, young children or disabled people as the 'vulnerable fuel poor' (DTI & DEFRA, 2001). It defines fuel poor households that do not include members in these circumstances as the 'healthy adult fuel poor'

Fuel Poverty Strategy

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy was published by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in 2001. The Strategy came about as a result of the Warm Homes and Conservation Act 2000 which required the Secretary of State for England and the National Assembly for Wales to publish and implement a strategy for reducing fuel poverty and set targets for its implementation. The Act requires the Government to eliminate fuel poverty among 'vulnerable households' and all social housing tenants in England by 2010 and among all remaining households in the private sector by 2016.

'Hard to treat' properties

Term used to describe properties where it is difficult to install cost effective energy efficiency measures and heating systems, i.e. loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and gas central heating. This includes properties built with solid walls and/or with non traditional building construction or are not connected to the gas network.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) (Wales)

HEES grants are available for people who own or privately rent their home and are on certain benefits or tax credits. They are available to people over 60, have children under 16, are pregnant, are disabled or have a long-term illness. Grants provide energy efficiency advice, energy-efficiency light bulbs and a package of insulation and heating measures up to a value of £1,500. People over 60, lone parents and disabled people on certain benefits or tax credits are also entitled to HEES Plus grants for central heating systems, up to a value of £2,700 (including insulation).

Ofgem

The Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) was established under the Utilities Act 2000 to regulate the gas and electricity supply industries. It combines the regulatory functions previously carried out separately by OFGAS and OFFER.

Passport benefits

Term used to describe those benefits and tax credits that households must receive before they can be referred for help under Warm Front or 'priority EEC'. In the case of Warm Front and HEES, households must also include either a child under 16, a

person over 60 or a disabled person and live in the private sector (private rented or owner occupied).

Priority Service Register (PSR)

All suppliers are obliged to operate a PSR, which all older and disabled people living on their own are entitled to join (but only about 25% do). People on the register are entitled to such services as a free annual gas safety check, re-positioning of their meter, access to a password scheme for fuel company representatives and adaptations to gas and electricity equipment.

'Renewables'

Term used to describe small scale domestic renewable energy, e.g. ground source heat pumps, solar thermal, biomass boilers. Community schemes may involve a central biomass Combined Heat and Power plant coupled with a local district heating scheme.

Sustainable Energy

Energy that meets current needs without depleting the resources available to future generations. The term also encompasses the notion of equity between different consumer groups, such that all have 'fair' access to the energy services they need. Sometimes mistakenly used instead of the term 'renewable energy' (energy from wind, wave, geothermal, solar etc).

Warm Deal (Scotland)

Warm Deal grants are available for people who own or privately rent their home and are on certain benefits or tax credits. Grants provide energy efficiency advice, 4 energy-efficiency light bulbs and insulation up to a value of £500. 25% grants are also available to people over 60 not on a qualifying benefit.

Warm Front (England)

Warm Front grants are available for people who own or privately rent their home and are on certain benefits or tax credits. They are available to people over 60, have children under 16, are pregnant, are disabled or have a long-term illness. Grants provide energy efficiency advice, 2 energy-efficiency light bulbs and a package of insulation and heating measures, including central heating, up to a value of £2,700. Oil central heating can also be offered, where lower carbon alternatives are not available, and until recently was regarded as a relatively economical alternative for households without access to gas. In such cases, the grant maximum is raised to £4,000.

Warm Home Scheme (WHS) (Northern Ireland)

Warm Home Scheme grants are available for people who own or privately rent their home and are on certain benefits or tax credits. They are available to people over 60, have children under 16, are pregnant, are disabled or have a long-term illness. Grants provide energy efficiency advice, energy-efficiency light bulbs and insulation measures up to a value of £750. People over 60 are also entitled to Warm Home Scheme Plus grants for new or replacement central heating systems, up to a value of £3,700 (including insulation).

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