



FUEL POVERTY SOLUTIONS WORKSHOP 13.5.2016

CASE STUDIES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Situation 1	Intervention	Outcome
Hastings working family with 3 young children in receipt of working tax/child credits. On low incomes with water debt, struggling to stay warm for 5 years in private rented house with damp and mould issues. Very old boiler last made in 1995. Rads with no TRVs. Repeated health issues. Using prepayment meters.	H and family featured in BBC Panorama – Too poor to stay warm. Offer of support from local MP (Rt Hon Amber Rudd) EPC and energy check completed (= E rated EPC (SAP score 51). House now for sale and tenant given Section 21 eviction notice so no further tenant-centred investment possible.	Landlord (a solicitor) unhappy with Panorama programme. Claimed that he was familiar with ECO schemes and had installed all the energy improvements possible. Clear implications for landlord legislation in 2018 (where E rated EPC homes considered adequate). Data logger used to measure temp and humidity levels shows remarkable results. This home is having a noticeable effect on children’s learning, wellbeing and health (with humidity levels at 90%)

Recommendation

- An All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) needed to decide on criteria for a “Healthy Home” – Current Energy Efficiency minimum rating (EPC band E) not enough!

Situation 2	Intervention	Outcome
Single working mother in Wealden with young (disabled) children renting off-gas period rural property (oil heating, damp, cold) . High usage. In debt to Energy supplier, problems with meter	Local oil group gave 1 year supply for free. BESN Energy champion wrote to Scottish Power Fund who wrote off £ 940 debt. Switched Tariff to save £ 300. Received Winter Home Check who fitted energy saving measures.	Positive but indicative of amount of support needed. This client should also receive the WHD. Supplier with indebted vulnerable customer like this should not have them on standard tariff. Need to resolve meter issues when electricity consumption registers this high (7500 kwh). Key need for rural RHI and energy efficiency investment



Recommendation

- RHI and low carbon innovation funds to be targeted at the rural off-gas fuel poor. Potential link with Central Heating Fund where no grid connection viable.

Situation 3	Intervention	Outcome
Single mother of three renting 4-bed draughty, hard to heat home in Brighton. High bills	BESN Champion helped her switch tariff and access WHD to save £ 800/year. Also installed energy saving measures	Positive result but this client one of 1000's in council properties that have had no energy efficiency improvements since they were constructed in the 1960's. Switching tariff not enough, home energy improvements urgently needed

Recommendation

- Councils to be given ECO 2 funding to work with community groups and local consortia. 2021 target to raise E and F rated fuel poor homes to C energy efficiency rating too slow. Straight to C (but how to identify the worst houses if they don't have EPCs)

Situation 4	Intervention	Outcome
Brighton homeowner-pensioner in draughty older property renting rooms to students. Current bill £ 2770 pa.	BESN Champion helped him switch tariff – mainly by switching him away from E7 day/night tariffs – saving £ 625 year. Energy Saving measures fitted	Positive result but confirms how many consumers do not use Economy 7 meters efficiently. Usage must be over 60% at night for residents to benefit otherwise they are on the wrong tariff.



Recommendation

- Most E7 tariffs no use to residents. Suppliers should automatically switch them to cheaper tariff. At the very least send letter explaining need to switch.

Situation 5	Intervention	Outcome
Brighton widow in her 70's became indebted to energy supplier (£ 900)	BESN Champion completed 3 year analysis of bills to find day and night usage had been erroneously switched. This saved £ 700. Supplier did not accept error until 6 month meter log was supplied.	Positive result but many vulnerable consumers are in this situation with concerns about meters and errors. (some concerns incorrect) Very time consuming support exercise

Recommendation

- When errors are admitted Suppliers need to compensate, not just correct them. Also cover costs of energy champions who help vulnerable sort out bill errors

Situation 6	Intervention	Outcome
Home owning Hastings couple in their 90's on pension credits and DLA with cold related illness and high bills and usage. Large temperature difference between living room and other rooms. Reluctance to downsize	Gas CH but also using night storage heaters and E7 tariff (so high elec users but also had free solar panels installed!). BG service contract on their boiler. Meters not read for 1.5 yrs. £ 1100 in credit on estimated readings	BESN champion gave BG up to date meter reading. BG paid back £ 780 cheque. Switched supplier to save further £ 360 pa. Further work on water bills due. Working with Steps East support worker. Had winter home check. Couple delighted with savings but BG sent debt collection letter that distressed them.



Recommendation

Priority service clients on standard tariffs with meters out of reach should not be getting estimated readings for 1.5 years. Letter to supplier (BG)

Situation 7	Intervention	Outcome
Hastings tenant in his 80's on pension credit, no savings, lost interest and direction after car accident and death of partner after 40 years. Charged for electricity by two companies. In debt to Southern Water, BG and Eon. Ignored the brown envelopes (following his partner's death)	Erroneous transfer by EDF meant he overpaid for 2 years. BESN champion interceded and EDF refunded £ 2185. Applying for debt relief on other energy bills and water. Paying £ 90 /m payment plans. Had Winter Home Check.	This has changed his life - he came to a pot luck supper with Transition Town group. He feels he is "getting his life back". As a successful comedian and raconteur we hope he will become an ambassador for pensioner groups

Recommendation

As above :- When errors are admitted suppliers need to compensate, not just correct them. Also cover costs of energy champions for time spent sorting out bill errors (can be multiple hours)

Situation 8	Intervention	Outcome
Hastings husband in his 50's v ill (COPD, heart and breathing difficulties. Hospital needed) - boiler not working, leaking into loft which he could not access with his illness. Low income -pension credits for her, His illness and breathing difficulties meant he needed the windows open to breathe even when central heating was on (for her). Help needed urgently.	CLF and BESN funded Energy Champion obtained EPC, sent plumber to fix boiler temporarily. Applied to Npower Health through Warmth for new boiler (partnering with NEA) .	New boiler installed, some insulation. Client very pleased and grateful though husband had to return to hospital for more treatment Clear case of how collaboration between multiple agencies can support (and fund) essential repairs and energy efficiency improvements quickly. This is what ECO 2 funds should facilitate but needs a data sharing protocol



Recommendation

- Data sharing protocol needed between voluntary and community orgs – but also with energy suppliers who can refer those in need (obvious from usage or indebtedness) to local supporting agencies (including GP Surgeries). No need for consent. Just automatic system referral. GPs can then system-share data with local networks

Situation 9	Intervention	Outcome
Rother rural Family on WTC and DLA with severely disabled child. Struggling to heat off gas home with only electric heating. Let down by British Gas ECO funded Warm Home scheme. Assessed twice for HHCRO	Energy Champion arranged EPC and referral to EDF Trust and free biomass boiler scheme	Not able to get free biomass boiler as heat demand of property only 12500 kwh (22,000 min required) – offer since scrapped. Although supported since 2012 this family unlucky with eligibility and ECO scheme. Continuously let down and expectations dashed

Recommendation

- RHI to be targeted at the vulnerable. Link with Central Heating Fund and ECO 2 if off-gas. LAs to manage funds. Positive investment of pension funds away from coal (systemic risk) and into revolving retrofit and housing infrastructure fund (?)



Situation 10	Intervention	Outcome
<p>Hastings mother and daughter with mental and physical illnesses and disabilities made worse by cold and damp. Could not afford to heat their 2 bed park home when it was freezing.. £10,000 debt to Santander (repayment at £10/week). Joint annual income £ 11 k (PIP/ ESA/ Carers allowance) Her medical condition requires a dehumidifier that is constantly on. Electricity is by private wire, heat LPG . She is paying for the Park Home and paying £ 4000 per year for ground rent</p>	<p>Tried to refer to WHD and get the Npower Health Through Warmth funding for insulation (costing £ 6000). Npower unable to help as a park home counts as a holiday let. One company (Insulated Homes) able to offer a grant of £ 500. This is a desperate situation that many face when they find they have taken loans for park homes and find they are not entitled to housing benefit or grants.</p>	<p>Uncertain. Have tried to contact client and left messages but there is little that she can expect in the way of grant funded interventions in her circumstances. This is something we wish to try and address Similar situation for vulnerable tenants living in HMOs and paying their landlords for electricity without any record of usage.</p>

Recommendation

- Better licensing/regulation for Park Homes and HMOs. Price Cap (CMA) on prepayment meters should apply to private wire and HMO suppliers. WHD should be accessible by the vulnerable in this situation.