

ENERGY REPORT – 2016 - 2017

In a climate of financial uncertainty and reform, it can be challenging for a household to stay on top of its energy bills. Citizens Advice research shows that almost one in ten households fell behind with an essential household bill over a twelve-month period.

Citizens Advice North Warwickshire has been making people aware of the savings that can be made by switching fuel providers or negotiating with existing providers by delivering a number of energy projects throughout the year. These include Energy Best Deal, Energy Best Deal Extra, Big Energy Saving Week and a project through the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS). The bureau also set up its own project 'Switched on Fridays' in-house to help promote its energy work.

Energy Best Deal & Energy Best Deal Extra

Energy Best Deal and EBDx are based around providing group training sessions aimed at groups of consumers who are in or at risk of fuel poverty and frontline workers and volunteers who support them. The campaign aims to make people aware of the savings that can be made by switching fuel providers or negotiating with existing providers.

The sessions include training on the switching process and gathering the information needed for an effective tariff change or switch to a new providers. We also provide information about help available from energy suppliers and the government for people struggling to pay their gas and electricity bills and inform consumers about how they might save money by using less energy.

In addition to advising on fuel poverty, energy, and thermal efficiency measures, the adviser supports consumers (as appropriate) with the full range of Citizens Advice Services such as identifying and claiming benefits and dealing with debt.

Big Energy Saving Week

Karen and Lorraine held an event at Dobbies Garden Centre, Mancetter. They spoke to 78 consumers providing them with information and advice regarding switching energy suppliers, energy efficiency and a number of referrals were made to the bureau. The Mayor of North Warwickshire John Smitten attended the event. The Mayor entered the spirit of the occasion and spoke to several consumers about his own successful switching experience.



**"It's never
too soon to
start
switching!"**



Big Energy Saving Network - BEIS

The Big Energy Saving Network ran through autumn & winter with outreach activity concluding in March 2017. As part of this BEIS funded project, our two Energy Champions delivered an extensive programme of outreach sessions to consumers focused on helping them to reduce their energy costs through assistance with tariffs and switching and supporting the take up of energy efficiency offers. Each Champion received specialised training from National Energy Action to help them fulfil their role.



Across the network the Champions were responsible for coordinating the training of further community volunteers and frontline workers from organisations including DWP, local Mental Health workers, Tenancy Support at the borough council and Barnados Children's Centre Staff. These volunteers and frontline workers will in turn deliver personalised advice to consumers on taking action to reduce energy bills through switching tariff or payment method and exploring eligibility for supplier and government schemes that help consumers with their fuel bills.

Community Groups included Age UK, the Dordon Church Ladies Group and the Older Peoples Forum. Over 160 people attended from these groups.

Case Study



Client is retired, lives alone in owner-occupier property and has long term health issues. She came to the bureau for help to switch energy supplier. When she attempted to switch she discovered that she was in arrears of over £800.

Citizens Advice identified a billing error caused by an earlier mistake made in reading an old-style dial meter, resulting in an overcharge. We helped her communicate with the supplier and provide evidence of the error. The meter was read and the account was amended to show a credit of just over £1,000. With the intervention of our energy adviser, the company agreed to a refund.

The client was now free of debt and able to re-approach her chosen supplier and switch, saving £145 per year. As the whole process took many calls and emails and further meter reading errors, we also succeeded in getting the client financial compensation through her complaint.

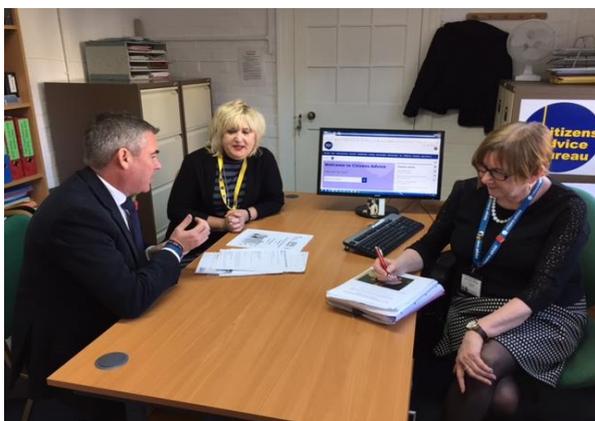
In 2016-17, North Warwickshire Citizens Advice helped with 1,046 advice issues related to Utility and Communications. We saved clients a total of £37,681 per year through helping people switch supplier, and £17,709 per year through helping people switch to a cheaper deal from their current supplier.



SWITCHED ON FRIDAYS

North Warwickshire MP Craig Tracey launched 'Switched on Fridays' at the bureau, where from October 28th 2016 consumers were invited to visit us with their latest energy bills for a quick drop-in advice session with an energy champion.

Switched On Friday clients are given help to find out if they can save money by changing to a cheaper tariff or supplier. Information on other energy problems like fuel debts, smart meters or schemes like the Warm Home Discount is also available where appropriate. The energy champions can also discuss how to make their homes more energy efficient and good practice for reducing energy consumption.



MP Craig Tracey also provided his own energy bills and a comparison was made to show that he could save nearly £200 by switching.

Case Study



A number of clients have been helped to switch supplier or tariff including Margaret who had never changed supplier before, not realising how much can be saved. After visiting us her yearly bills were reduced by £588.84.



Margaret attended an Energy Best Deal Group Session at the Over 50's Group at Age UK (Warwickshire). By switching provider, Margaret saved nearly £600.

For any queries regarding Citizens Advice North Warwickshire's work on energy advice contact our energy champions:

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