



North Warwickshire Citizens Advice supports local people with their energy problems, helping with over 800 fuel and utility issues each year. Through our funded energy projects we deliver group sessions on energy matters and one-to-one support with getting people the best deals on their energy supply. In 2017-18 we helped find almost 100 households better deals on energy, saving local residents a total of £17,160 per year.

Energy Best Deal & Energy Best Deal Extra

Energy Best Deal is based around providing group training sessions aimed at consumers who are in or at risk of fuel poverty and frontline workers who can support them. The campaign aims to make people aware of the savings they can make by switching fuel providers or tariffs. We delivered sessions to groups such as Warwickshire Vision for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

The sessions include training on the switching process and gathering the information needed for an effective tariff change or switch to a new provider to save money. We also provide information about help available from energy suppliers and the government for people struggling to pay their gas and electricity bills, and educate consumers on being more energy efficient.

In addition to advising on fuel poverty, energy, and thermal efficiency measures, the adviser can offer support where needed with the full range of Citizens Advice services such as identifying and claiming benefits and dealing with debt.

Energy Best Deal Extra is a one-to-one session with consumers, often following on from an Energy Best Deal group session. We look at individual bills, switching and saving, benefits eligibility, the Priority Service Register and the Big Difference Scheme.

SWITCHED ON FRIDAYS

Clients can simply drop in to the office and receive initial help to find out if they can save money by changing to a cheaper tariff or supplier. Appointments can then be made to look at other energy matters like fuel debts, smart meters or schemes like the Warm Home Discount. The energy champion can also discuss good practice for reducing energy consumption and how to make their homes more energy efficient.



Our Energy Champion
Lorraine running an
EBD session for
Warwickshire Vision

“I enjoy being a volunteer EBD advisor as I like empowering people to save money on one of the biggest bills that a household will pay.”

Dawn, NWCA volunteer



Case Study



Andrea was referred to us by North Warwickshire Borough Council. She had given up her job due to severe mental health issues. She was struggling to pay her bills and had problems with her ESA claim. Her home was at risk as she had a mortgage which she could not afford. She had arrears with her energy supplier and had received poor advice from a local bank which had compounded her problem.

Outcomes – Andrea’s ESA claim was resolved. We assisted her with switching to a new cheaper tariff and set up an affordable arrangement with her supplier to pay off her arrears. She has been added to the Priority Service Register with Western Power Distribution. We applied to the Big Difference Scheme (Severn Trent) for a discount on her water bill, saving her approximately £300 per year. Following a complaint letter by Citizens Advice to her bank, she has since received over £100 in compensation and further assistance from the bank manager regarding her mortgage which has helped her stay in the property. We also identified eligibility for the Warm Home Discount Scheme, further reducing her energy bills by £140 per year.

Big Energy Saving Network - NEA



The Big Energy Saving Network ran through autumn & winter with outreach activity concluding in March 2018. As part of this NEA funded project, our Energy Champion Lorraine 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. Lorraine received specialised training from National Energy Action to help fulfil the role. Community groups included a Ladies Church group and Age UK, North Warwickshire. Over one hundred consumers attended from these groups.



Audrey from Dordon Lady's Group won our free prize draw for an energy-saving slow cooker by completing our energy questionnaire

Across the network our Champion was responsible for co-ordinating the training of community energy volunteers and frontline workers by arranging our Essential Energy Forum, held in February 2018. The Forum was a great success and the event was featured in the ALEO Magazine - see appendix.



For any queries regarding Citizens Advice North Warwickshire’s work on energy advice contact our energy champion, Lorraine:

lorraineverrall@nwcab.org.uk

Appendix – North Warwickshire Essential Energy Forum



Citizens Advice – Bringing Frontline Workers Together for Our Essential Energy Forum

North Warwickshire Citizens Advice (NWCA) held an Essential Energy Forum for frontline workers on Thursday 15 February 2018 in the Partnership Centre, Atherstone. The event was attended by over 30 frontline staff from organisations such as Warwickshire Fire and Rescue, North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC), Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Act on Energy and Craig Tracey MP's Office.

Citizens Advice is well-positioned as an organisation to advise on energy as a charity embedded in the community who frequently help people dealing with financial hardship, fuel poverty and energy-related consumer issues. The North Warwickshire office has an Energy Champion, Deputy Manager Lorraine Verrall, funded by National Energy Action. Lorraine has helped North Warwickshire residents save £15,731 so far in 2017-18 on their annual energy bills.

The morning consisted of four table talks:

- Lorraine from NWCA talked about Smart Meters, energy efficiency and the Priority Service Register
- Daniel from NWCA talked about the case for and the process of switching energy suppliers and tariffs to save money
- Sally from NWBC talked about the Council's new customer referral form used by local residents and frontline workers to refer households through to appropriate agencies like Citizens Advice for assistance
- Rosie from Act on Energy talked about home energy efficiency, ECO and local grants

All the table talks were designed to be interactive and highlight how frontline workers from any organisation could help their clients with energy matters or support them with getting the help they need, with particular focus on households in hardship or fuel poverty. The talks were followed up by a networking session featuring information stands from organisations present, including P3, Doorway, British Legion and the Family Information Service.

Positive feedback has been received from attendees:

- "A well organised and informative event... I liked the interaction in the table talk events"



Pictured left-to-right: The four table talk speakers, Lorraine Verrall (NWCA), Rosie Hermitage (Act on Energy), Daniel Sargent (NWCA) and Sally Roberts (NWBC)

- "All sessions were useful, I gained more details and information... really enjoyed the forum"
- "A very useful and interesting day. The information provided will be very beneficial for our customers. Excellent event, thank you"
- "Informative event, lots of useful info. Was really fast paced"

NWCA Deputy Manager and Energy Champion Lorraine said "The event was a great success which emphasised partnership working and how local organisations can contribute to the wellbeing of Warwickshire households. We hope to duplicate it in the future."

NWBC Benefits and Financial Inclusion Shared Services Manager, Sally Roberts, said "This was a well-planned and informative event offering frontline workers the opportunity to learn about services available to support local people. It was great to see so many of our partners represented, demonstrating their commitment to working together to support the wellbeing of our communities."

- Daniel Sargent and Lorraine Verrall



Published in ALEO Magazine issue 50: <https://aleo.org.uk/magazine.php>