

the
Speakeasy
advice centre

energy

advice project

Project Update
Winter 2013/14

Our Work

Since the launch of our Energy Advice Project in July 2011 we have assisted over 750 people, advising and supporting them on a range of energy-related issues. These include:

- dealing with fuel debt;
- payment options and budgeting; *and*
- saving energy at home.

With rising fuel costs, inefficient housing and less disposable income, more and more people are struggling to keep their homes warm. Many have fallen into arrears and it can often be difficult to negotiate with your energy supplier and get back on your feet.

Over the past 2½ years, we have helped numerous people arrange affordable repayments for their gas and electricity and 210 households make an application to The British Gas Energy Trust (BGET) for a grant.¹

BGET Grants

The British Gas Energy Trust can award grants to help:

- **Clear gas and electricity debts**
(and, in exceptional circumstances, other priority debts)
- **Purchase essential household items**
(including white goods, beds, carpets and boiler replacements)
- **Provide other forms of financial help**
(including bankruptcy fees and funeral expenses)

Our clients have continued to enjoy some great success and, to date, we have seen **85% of applications successfully awarded grants**, with:

£53,998

to clear energy bill arrears

76

essential household items

£19,324

in other financial awards
(inc. boiler replacements, carpets & bankruptcy/DRO fees)

In addition, we have supported many people in accessing further help where appropriate, including Warm Home Discount Schemes, free central heating or other energy-related home improvements.¹

Please Note: You do **not** need to be a British Gas customer to apply to the Trust for help.

Case Study

Mike² had been experiencing considerable hardship, owing to ill health, loss of employment and relationship breakdown, and had fallen into arrears with his Gas supply.

Mike is in his mid-50s and, for the past 20 years, has lived at his current address which is rented via a local housing association.

For a long while, Mike worked in a factory but was eventually forced to leave due to deteriorating ill health. He suffers with a weak back and the frequent lifting that his work required proved too much.

As a result, Mike experienced a significant reduction in his household income and, over the last couple of years - with the increasing cost of living - fell into arrears with a number of his household bills.

He was previously billed quarterly for his Gas and could not keep up with his payments. In 2012, prepayment meters were then installed to recover the money that he owed and prevent his arrears from increasing further.

Sadly, the stress of these difficulties took its toll and Mike and his long-term partner separated, and his daughter visited him on a weekly basis.

However, Mike has since struggled to afford to adequately heat his home and over the previous winter, his daughter stopped visiting him altogether as it was too cold and she kept falling ill.

To compound matters, Mike's cooker then broke, meaning that he was entirely dependent on a microwave to cook all of his food.

With the assistance of Speakeasy Advice Centre, Mike made an application to The British Gas Energy Trust and was awarded a new cooker and a payment of £1,366 to clear his Gas arrears, relieving him of the burden of this debt. This provided him with an invaluable fresh-start, and has helped him to see his daughter more frequently and work towards rebuilding his life.

Expansion

The Energy Advice Project is funded by The British Gas Energy Trust. We have recently been awarded additional funding to expand our service and, in September 2013, recruited Andy Davis as our new Trainee Fuel Debt Adviser.

We hope that this will increase our capacity to help those living in fuel poverty, and submit more applications to The British Gas Energy Trust while maintaining our excellent success rate.

We would be very grateful if you would continue to inform and refer anybody you come across whom you think may benefit.

The British Gas
energy trust

Literature

If you would like any free project literature to distribute to your clients or colleagues please contact us using the details below.

our service
The Energy Advice Project aims to help relieve fuel poverty in South Wales. We advise on a number of energy-related issues and support clients in accessing further help where appropriate. Our free, confidential service includes:

- Advice on dealing with fuel debt, saving energy, payment options and budgeting
- Assistance with applications to The British Gas Energy Trust¹
- Referrals to Warm Home Discount Schemes, free central heating or other energy-related home improvements

grant applications
Individuals and families can apply to The British Gas Energy Trust for grants to clear arrears and give them a fresh start to deal with future energy bills. We offer one-to-one advice and assistance and support clients through the application process. The British Gas Energy Trust can award grants to help:

- Clear gas and electricity debts (including arrears, disconnections, other priority debts)
- Purchase essential household items (including white goods, beds and boiler replacements)
- Provide other forms of financial help (including bankruptcy fees and funeral expenses)

referral form
We welcome self-referrals from individuals, and frontline workers can refer clients to us for support. Please complete and return the form below and we will contact you.

Applicant Details

Name: _____
Address: _____
Post Code: _____
Date of Birth: _____
Telephone: _____
Email: _____
Date: _____

Energy Supply

Gas Supplier: _____
Electricity Supplier: _____
In arrears? Y / N _____

Referring Organisation (if applicable)

Organisation: _____
Contact Name: _____
Contact Telephone: _____

The Energy Advice Project is funded by **The British Gas energy trust**

You do not need to be a British Gas customer to apply to the Trust for help.

A4 tri-fold leaflet



A6 postcard

Contact Us

The Energy Advice Project is a free service of Speakeasy Advice Centre and provides support to individuals and families experiencing financial difficulties.

We provide advice and assistance over the telephone to people living across Wales. We also hold clinics providing face-to-face assistance from our office in Roath, Cardiff.

For more information, please contact us:

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Sharing the Burden. Fighting Injustice. Bringing Hope.



¹Information correct as of 20th December 2013.

²Names have been changed to protect client confidentiality.