

## **Appendix 1: Current Initiatives**

**Some of the schemes/initiatives below demonstrate the help and assistance already available to households in fuel poverty**

### **1.0 Government Initiatives**

#### **1.1 Winter fuel payments**

For winter 2011/12, The Government will make a winter fuel payments of up to £200 to all persons over the age of 60. Those over 80 can claim £300.

#### **1.2 Cold Weather Payment**

A Cold Weather Payment is a benefit paid by the Government and is intended to help towards extra heating costs during very cold weather. A payment of £25.00 is paid automatically for each seven day period of very cold weather between 1 November to 31 March. It is a regulated payment and not subject to a budget.

To qualify for a Cold Weather Payment a person must be entitled to one of the following benefits

- Income Support
- Employment and Support Allowance (income-related)
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Pension Credit

#### **1.3 Warm Front**

Consumers in England who need help paying for heating and insulation improvements and live in a privately owned or rented home, may be able to get money from the government's Warm Front grants scheme if, for example, they are receiving any of a range of benefits such as income or disability-related benefits.

#### **1.4 The Energy Saving Trust**

The government funded Energy Saving Trust offers impartial advice on energy efficiency measures for domestic consumers

### **2.0 Energy Supplier Schemes**

#### **2.1 E.ON Caring Energy Fund**

This scheme is aimed at assisting low income households who may not be eligible for Government schemes it includes:

- Payments in full or part to cover the cost of cavity and loft insulation
- Payments in full or part to cover the costs of repairing or installing heating measures
- Payments to cover the cost of household appliances

## **2.2 EDF Energy Trust Fund**

A charity that gives grants to people with energy and phone bill debts. Two types of grant are available:

- 1) To cover payment of energy or phone and other essential household bills or costs  
This assistance is available to anyone in need, hardship or other distress.
- 2) Grants to voluntary organisations working in the field of money advice debt counselling or energy efficiency advice.

## **2.3 British Gas Energy Trust & Scottish Energy Trust**

This scheme is eligible to anyone in need, hardship or other distress and can assist with:

- Arrears with domestic gas/electricity charges
- Other essential domestic bills and costs.

## **2.4 Home Heat Helpline**

The Energy Retail Association, which represents energy suppliers, has set up the Home Heat Helpline (0800 33 66 99). It is a free national helpline for vulnerable customers having difficulties paying their fuel bills. It advises customers worried about paying fuel bills advises on grants, benefits and payment schemes then forwards calls to the customer's energy supplier.

## **2.5 Social Tariffs**

Some suppliers offer cheaper energy deals to those customers on low incomes.

## **2.6 Priority Service Register (PSR)**

If you are of pensionable age, disabled or chronically sick you can qualify for the Priority Service Register (PSR) by ringing your gas and electricity companies. Customers on the register are entitled to additional services free of charge, such as: free annual gas safety checks for qualifying customers, password schemes, bills available in large print and braille as well as talking bills, quarterly meter reading services (if no person occupying the premises is able to read the meter), having a prepayment meter moved to improve access, bill nominee scheme, and priority in an emergency (this could include providing alternative heating and cooking facilities in the event of supply disconnection).

**Suppliers are also prohibited from disconnecting a premises occupied by a customer eligible for the PSR during the winter months (1 October - 31 March).**

## **2.7 Debt and disconnection**

Suppliers make considerable efforts to encourage customers to discuss their circumstances with them directly so that a suitable payment arrangement can be put in place to recover the debt. Failing that, suppliers have an obligation to offer the installation of a prepayment meter to avoid the need for disconnection.

Suppliers have put in place a further safety net offering further protection for vulnerable customers. This includes fitting a prepayment meter (where it is safe to do so) or putting the customer onto the Fuel Direct payment scheme. If offers of help are refused and the customer continues to be at risk, social services will be notified for further support and assistance.