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The heart of what we do:
National Energy Action's
Lived Experience Library



Our lived experience library

- A growing, filterable bank of case studies
- Provides a unique window into the experiences of individuals and underserved groups and communities
- Demonstrating impact and outcomes of support
- Highlighting the need for advocacy and campaigning



The case studies: Colin's story

Background

Colin is 59 years old and lives in social housing with his wife. Colin has asthma, and is also a carer for his wife, who is a wheelchair-user and is medically dependent on electricity. Due to his wife's mobility issues, they had been obliged to move properties in April 2021. At that time, they were unable to bring the cooker from their previous flat, and so had been living without one for over 2 and a half years.

"We struggle on from day to day"

They had moved from an upstairs flat into a downstairs flat within the same building, but were not aware that their energy would be with a different supplier. Their social housing landlord had changed the supplier before Colin and his wife moved in and didn't let them know. Colin found himself having to contact multiple suppliers over a period of 4 months, just to find out who his supplier was. Once he found this out, he then began to experience a great deal of difficulty trying to get in touch with them – he tried emailing, writing and telephone calls and yet was still not able to get through. He also tried to go through the Ombudsman, but they unfortunately referred him back to the current supplier to get his complaint answered – however, the complaint was never answered. Colin said that all they wanted to do was pay their energy bill, but that the supplier was making this impossible:

"Our lives are hard enough [without worrying] about this"

Advisor reflections

"This case has been a harrowing one. The account issues have taken many hours of the clients' and National Energy Action's time. The initial requests made of the supplier were purely that an energy account be correctly set up. This did not occur, which caused not only great stress and strain, but a significant debt build-up. Further impacts were that the 2 householders, (both with health issues & financial vulnerability) spent 3 winters with the most limited use of heating due to worries about the costs of using further energy.

My own experiences of the case have been that the clients were easy to work with and really keen to find a resolution. I was grateful to have successfully intercepted the prepayment meter being installed against regulations. I was very pleased to have the Energy Ombudsman case upheld. However, the 'remedies' are yet to be applied correctly by the supplier, and so the case continues. The Ombudsman does not routinely check that requested 'remedies' are carried out correctly by the suppliers, and therefore further negotiations are often required. To-date, the outcomes for the clients have been positive. However, knowing that the clients in question are unable to afford current energy prices going forward, is unsettling."



The case studies: Lindsey's story

Background Information

Lindsey suffers from multiple health conditions, including asthma, hypertension, anxiety and depression. This means she needs to keep her home continuously warm. Lindsey began to find it difficult to afford her monthly direct debit payments to her energy supplier due to the increases in the price of energy. As a result, she was severely limiting her use of heating.

Energy Prices

Lindsey sought help from National Energy Action as she was struggling to afford her energy bills, which had skyrocketed from £54 a month two and half years ago to £200 a month in the winter of 2022/23. At most, Lindsey was only putting her heating on for a couple hours a day and the temperature in her home was regularly sitting at around 9 degrees, with the heating on, this would at best reach 18 degrees.

“At least when it was £54 I could put the heating on long enough for me to heat the building through, I don't mean every room stupidly, all I'm talking about just to take the damp off if you like, the edge off the dampness and to prevent damp really.”

Support

Lindsey decided to get in touch with National Energy Action, and an advisor helped her by speaking to her energy supplier and referred Lindsey to other organisations, such as Charis. Lindsey was also provided with energy vouchers, food shopping vouchers and a winter warmth pack.

“The gentleman I spoke to was brilliant. He rang when he said he'd ring, he advised... he ran through everything with me and he even had me on the phone with my energy supplier on a three-way call.

And then enabled me to reduce my monthly direct debit because I was sufficiently in credit for them to reduce it by £20. But gosh, I was so frightened when it went really cold that I then upped the direct debit by £10 as a sort of medium because I mean even this last month my bill was £16 more a month than it would normally be. But my advisor, I suppose it gave me a bit more confidence to perhaps heat the house for an hour or so longer each day than I was doing.”



Thank you!

Any questions?

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Visit www.nea.org.uk



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