Section A: CPHE to complete	
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Guidance title:	NICE Public Health Advisory Committee on Excess Winter Deaths and Morbidity
Committee:	NICE
Subject of expert testimony:	Initiatives taken by energy companies to assist vulnerable households
Section B: Expert to complete	
Summary testimony:	[Please use the space below to summarise your testimony in 250 – 1000 words – continue over page if necessary]

NEA is the leading UK Fuel Poverty charity. NEA's mission is to eradicate fuel poverty and we work with all key stakeholders to further this aim.

There are a range of programmes and initiatives being delivered by energy companies to assist vulnerable households. Most of these are paid for by energy consumers either directly through levies on bills as is the case with the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Warm Homes Discount (WHD) or indirectly as will be the case with the Smart Meter roll-out. It is therefore imperative that programmes can deliver benefit to vulnerable households as they are paying towards the delivery.

However, NEA believes that some of these programmes are not reaching the most vulnerable households for many reasons including:

- Funding available is not sufficient to tackle the problem of fuel poverty, for example the ECO programme provides funding of £540 million in 13/14 for low-income households compared to public funding of £771 million that was available in 10/11
- Programmes are funded by a levy on all consumer bills so all vulnerable consumers pay whether they access help or not. Only 34% of English fuel poor households are eligible for ECO Affordable Warmth
- There is no uniform offering for ECO and WHD – this varies between suppliers
- Ability to access funds depends on where you live, rural communities are particularly disadvantaged
- You are more likely to be in fuel poverty if you live in Northern Ireland, Wales or Scotland but you are more likely to receive support for energy efficiency measures in those countries than in England
- Investment on energy efficiency from the public purse varies - £3.52 per electricity consumer in England/£36.48 in Scotland/£31.31 in Wales and £27.55 in NI

NEA has undertaken various research programmes exploring the nature of barriers to take up of energy efficiency and fuel poverty assistance among vulnerable groups.

These are detailed in the reports referenced below and include:

- Lack of knowledge of the assistance available – in one study 69% of respondents had not heard of the ECO scheme and only 31% had heard of the Priority Services Register
- Information is not provided in an accessible format – literacy, numeracy, visual impairment barriers
- The requirement to pay a client contribution precludes vulnerable clients from accessing help
- Eligibility criteria are too complex and often differ across different suppliers and there is no uniform service offering
- Concerns about the quality of workmanship by contractors
- Tenants express concerns regarding potential rent increases if they agree to improvements and other fear retaliatory eviction if the landlord doesn't consent.

On a positive note there are many examples of programmes and initiatives supported by energy suppliers that do work for vulnerable households, some examples of NEA's work with energy suppliers and Government include:

- Training and mentoring Community Energy Champions as local trusted intermediaries to cascade energy advice and to signpost available service provision
- Provision of Fuel Debt advice
- Provision of bespoke resources to signpost available services for example a 'Fuel Poverty Action Guide' and *Heat is On* DVD in 13 community languages
- Providing a programme of development support for selected Health and Well Being Boards to take forward action on fuel poverty
- Coalition working for example supporting the Age Action Alliance through local awareness events and resource development for member organisations.

Further information on these and other programmes is available on NEA's website: www.nea.org.uk

NEA is working proactively with Government, suppliers, the regulator, all political parties and all key stakeholders to ensure we can shape the forthcoming fuel poverty strategy. The following recommendations are some of the many noted in the NEA & Energy Action Scotland's UK Fuel Poverty Monitor launched on 27 March in partnership with Consumer Futures:

- A more ambitious energy efficiency programme, well-resourced with Government funding reinstated in England to fully fund measures for low-income householders - Energy Bill Revolution campaign
- A minimum energy efficiency standard of 'B' by 2030 and 'D' by 2020 incorporated into the new fuel poverty strategy
- Guaranteed assistance to specific householders – i.e. mandated referrals, for example based on health need as exemplified by npower Health through Warmth's approach
- Greater co-ordination across Government departments and devolved

administrations on all consumer issues.

In conclusion, overcoming the barriers to providing affordable warmth for low-income households is challenging. With political will, adequate resources, effective co-ordination across nations and Government departments and co-ordinated action at a community level it represents a huge opportunity to:

- Address fuel poverty
- Tackle health inequalities
- Reduce poverty
- Deliver on carbon reduction targets
- Deliver the aspirations of the Community Energy Strategy and building more resilient communities
- Contribute towards economic growth
- Reduce financial exclusion; and
- Reduce poor educational outcomes.

References (if applicable):

Warm Homes for Older People

www.nea.org.uk/policy-and-research/current-reserarch-projects/age-action-alliance

Green Deal and ECO: The design and delivery of energy efficiency and fuel poverty services to vulnerable citizens

www.nea.org.uk/policy-and-research/current-reserarch-projects/green-deal-advice

Smart for All

http://www.nea.org.uk/policy-and-research/publications/2014/smart-for-all

UK Fuel Poverty Monitor

http://www.nea.org.uk/policy-and-research/publications/2014

Fuel Poverty Action Guide which lists the assistance available

http://www.nea.org.uk/Resources/NEA/Publications/2013/Fuel%20Poverty%20Action%20Guide%202014%2011th%20Edition%20(March%202014)%20LoQ.pdf

NEA & DECC Beyond 2012 Data Sharing – the Local Authority role in addressing fuel poverty and energy efficiency

http://www.nea.org.uk/policy-and-research/recent-research/beyond-2012