

Community Energy London
April Open Meeting Minutes
30th April 2020, 6-8PM, Zoom Call

'Community Energy Action under Lockdown'



Attendees

Anna Rebmann - Pleydell TMO
Chris Kilby
derick Velloso Islington sea cadets
Emma Langhorne
Felix Wight, Repowering
Giovanna Speciale SELCE
Glyn Thomas Barnet Co-op Party
RLLtd-Gordon Repowering
Helen Mayer, Haringey Labour Climate Action
Jamie Baxter CREW Energy
Jason Pritchard Aldgate Solar
Katherin Garcia - CREW Energy
ifrane
Liz Ainslie, Islington Council
Martin Narraway, PUNL
Mike Smyth Energy4All
Mohammed el baaj Aldgate solar
Nadia Smith SELCE
Pamela Harling en10ergy and Wolves Lane
Paul Hallas SE24
Pippa
Ruth London Fuel Poverty Action
Sydney Charles en10ergy
Syed Ahmed Energy for London
Tanuja Pandit - power up north london
Victoria Ward Aldgate Solar Power
Zahrah Ali, TfL

Minutes CEL's monthly meeting included short presentations by three CEL member groups all involved in providing support to households on issues around energy and bills during the lockdown period.

1. Dr Giovanna Speciale, [SELCE](#) - [SELCE facebook](#)

- SELCE have started a delivery advice service over the phone
 - Households are ringing in facing a 'financial abyss'
 - Supporting them by working through their financial resources available to them
 - Initially provided telephone appointments to those who had previously booked appointment through SELCE's Energy Cafe programme
 - Katherin (who's comments follow below) is a shared resource between SELCE and fellow community energy group, CREW
 - Much of the advice and service they are finding they are having to provide is about providing advocacy for clients with energy companies
 - Liaising with energy companies to request 'payment holidays' for those struggling to pay bills
 - Do let clients know - if they are not on direct debit - don't pay
 - Providing support to help clients to switch to a cheaper energy tariff
 - Also to secure [Warm Homes Discount](#)
 - Also link into the ['Watersure'](#) initiative which provides a discount on water bills
 - half price water
 - Finding the greatest need is for [emergency top up vouchers](#) for those on prepayment meters
 - SELCE have directly provided funding to some clients to support them.
- Following this - some local authorities SELCE liaise have also done so (Lewisham)
- Have distributed leaflets about SELCE's services through food box deliveries which are being coordinated by community/neighbourhood groups
 - In Greenwich and Lewisham around 1000 such food boxes a week are delivered.
 - Have a relationship with a local support call centre who provide appropriate referrals to SELCE. Also have additional referral routes.
 - A lot of the challenges to date is logistically coordinating services with

neighbourhood groups. Giovanna's colleague, Nadia Smith of SELCE, has spent the previous week contacting groups to highlight SELCE's services.

- SELCE is about to launch a crowdfunder to raise funds to provide some emergency top up

[Further information is also available on the following SELCE article - '[Energy Advice for those Self-Isolating](#)']

2. Katherin Garcia, [CREW Energy](#)

- Katherin is the Energy Cafe manager

- A challenge in providing support as lockdown came on so quickly

- Consequently all workshops planned had to stop with services switched to phone support

- Receiving referrals from community groups - particularly [Sustainable Merton](#)

- In addition 50% of referrals are coming from Facebook and Twitter

- Have a large number of volunteers - including volunteers in Portugal and Poland, and are also offering services in Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Italian and French.

- Using Skype to provide advice

- Finding challenges in relation to client's ability to secure top up for their prepayment meters

- Many clients also very unclear on where to find help

- Have arranged online weekly meetings.

3. Felix Wight [Repowering London](#)

- Quite similar points to those made in earlier presentations. Repowering are continuing to provide a home energy advice service via telephone

- Have set up a dedicated webpage <https://www.repowering.org.uk/covid19/>

- Distributing a flyer highlighting Repowering services

- Finding that at beginning of lockdown a lot of people were not receiving information circulated by government - or were confused by information

received

- Working to ensure there is a suspension of disconnections for clients on credit meters who are experiencing payments problems
- Repowering is now working to set up a crises fund
- Measures being introduced by energy companies are addressing immediate problems - but clients will be facing longer term issues by building up debt
- Believe there should be an amnesty of credit debt
- Repowering are working up a service with other volunteer groups to provide support to clients who need help to physically top up a meter
- Challenge with this as often some PPE needed - and struggling to get this - so deferring action until can secure
- Working with Lambeth Council and other organisations - AGE UK are responding quickly - but with lot of small advocacy groups - has been harder to coordinate amongst them
- Support working for Repowering, Gordon, is doing great work to strengthen our network with these very local organisations
- looking at longer term need to create greater community resilience

Q&A Session

- Ruth from [Fuel Poverty Action](#) highlighted a petition they have in place to provide an amnesty/waive energy debt through the C19 crisis

COVID-19 : Guarantee people's heat and power .

There has been a sharp drop in wholesale prices - that will still take time to work it's way to customer prices. FPA campaigning for a 'warm floor' - a certain level of energy that everyone would get free

- Giovanna highlighted [Thames Water customer assistance fund](#)
- Katherin Garcia - for people that are not with Thames Water you can still apply for Water Sure with other water companies, here is the [link](#).

- Felix mentioned that- [npower](#) have an existing discretionary fund in place that Repowering have persuaded them to use.

- Giovanna mentioned that SELCE use [Charis Let's Talk support programme](#) to give out emergency top-up vouchers

- The latest round of the UK Power Networks (UKPN) [Power Partners](#) programme is open for applications. Deadline 31 May 2020.

- From Emma Langhorne passed on Croydon's [website](#) for financial support for community groups during the crises

- The [London Community Response Fund](#) is also open to applications [note - Wave 1 small grants now closed. Wave 2 grants £10-50k still open]

Liz Ainslie of Islington highlighted the council has set up a call centre providing services and is currently promoting to residents - provides a range of services. [SHINE](#) has been proactive - Seasonal Health Intervention Network (SHINE) is a fuel poverty referral network and free energy advice service for Londoners.

- The [Energy Doctors](#) is providing providing top up cards

- Islington Energy team can provide advice to most boroughs in North London

- Nadia Smith highlighted funding from [Veolia](#) for environmental community organisations

Our next CEL monthly meeting is scheduled for 6-8pm on Thursday 28 May. Details to follow.

PS FYI - To help assist people who may be struggling with their energy bills National Energy Action and Smart Energy GB have produced two new resources: **Help during Covid-19** and **Top energy saving tips** at <https://www.nea.org.uk/advice/help-during-the-covid-19-period/> . They will shortly be available in additional formats including British Sign Language, easy read, audio and other languages (Punjabi, Polish and Urdu). Please contact michael.potter@nea.org.uk if you would be interested in receiving these when available.