



**Safe, Warm Homes Working Group Meeting  
05 02 2015.**

**Attendees:**

Maria Wardrobe.	National Energy Action – Chair
Mervyn Kohler.	Age UK
Phil Hayes.	Dept. Communities and Local Government.
Russell Taylor.	Dept. Work and Pensions & AAA Secretariat.
Jane Minter.	Care & Repair England.
John Welham.	Leeds Older People’s Forum.
Pam Wynne	Dept. Energy and Climate Change
David Price-Evans	Checkatrade.com
Daniel Walker-Nolan	Citizens Advice
Tara Nix	Checkatrade.com
Robbie Stevenson	SGN
Simon Main	Bath & Main Associates
Hilary Bath	Bath & Main Associates.
Steve Crabb	British Gas

**Apologies:**

Shaun Robinson	Foundations
Rachel Wookey	Public Health England
Marc Primaroh	McCarthy and Stone
Sarah Davis	Chartered Institute of Housing

**1. Welcome, introduction and previous action points**

Maria welcomed everyone to the meeting and after brief introductions noted apologies for absence.

All previous meeting’s action points had been cleared or would be covered in the meeting.

## 2. Alliance Update

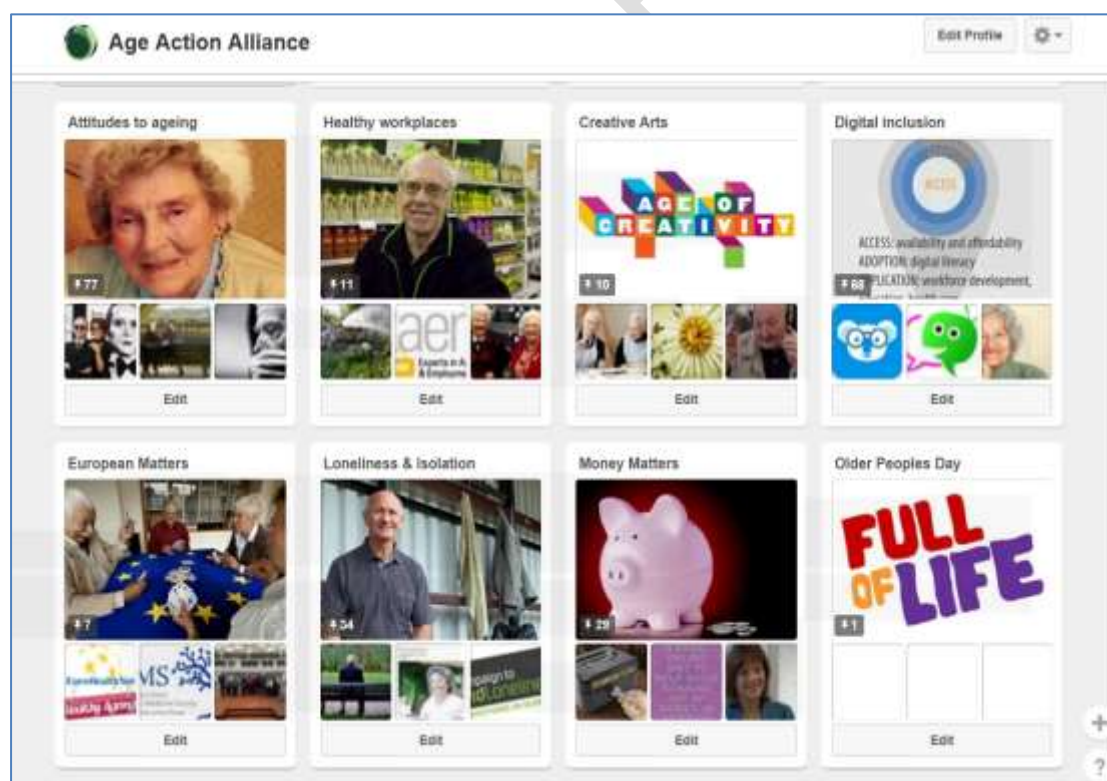
Russell provided a quick update.

Click [here](#) to download a [copy](#) of his presentation.

The overall message was the Alliance continues to grow, both in terms of its size/capacity but also its influence with a number of the Working Groups producing practical outcomes. For example:

- The Transport Working Group – Produced a significant Report on how to overcome the barriers to access for transport for Older People
- The Money Matters Working Group – Has produced a widely acclaimed leaflet that was so popular they are having to consider a 3<sup>rd</sup> print run.
- The Digital Inclusion Group is working closely with DCLG on its “Grey Cells” Blueprint
- The Excluded Group has produced a report that captures details of first contact schemes across the UK and developed a supporting You Tube clip on how to set up a scheme.

The Alliance has recently produced a Pinterest Board.



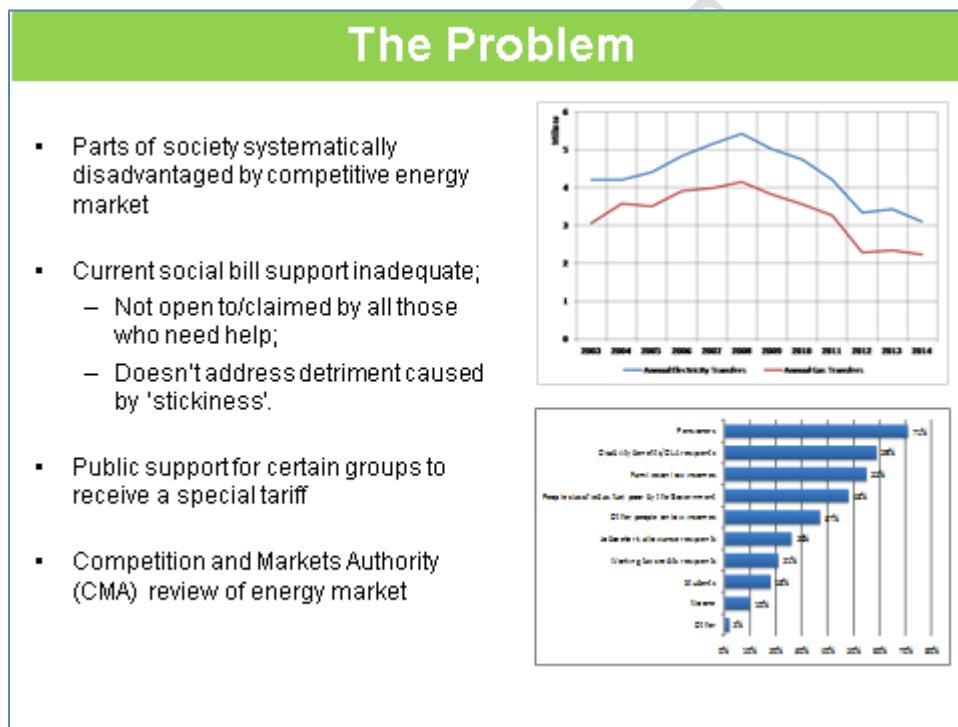
Members are encouraged to provide articles, reports etc that could be attached to the Board. This is a new venture for the Alliance, but one in which it wants to grow level of interest.

**AP1: Members to provide Russell with material that can be posted onto Pinterest. He will require a cover photo and a URL to support the article. Or alternatively send him the material and he will make something of it.**

### 3. Daniel Walker-Nolan – Citizens Advice.

Daniel introduced members to a campaign that is aimed at introducing an energy tariff for vulnerable people. Although his work is not complete Daniel walked the meeting through current deliberations and sought feedback on the proposal. Daniel's presentation can be viewed [here](#)

Part of the rationale was that vulnerable people are not being targeted with the best offers. Ofgem has previously confirmed this assertion. Research suggests that 62% of some of the most vulnerable do not take the opportunity to switch and when other factors are taken into account can result in them being over £300 worse off.



The meeting was very supportive of the principals behind the campaign and would be very keen to receive the Report once finalised. It was however pointed out the Alliance is unable to support any lobbying or campaigning, but would be content to share with members who would be free to consider their own position.

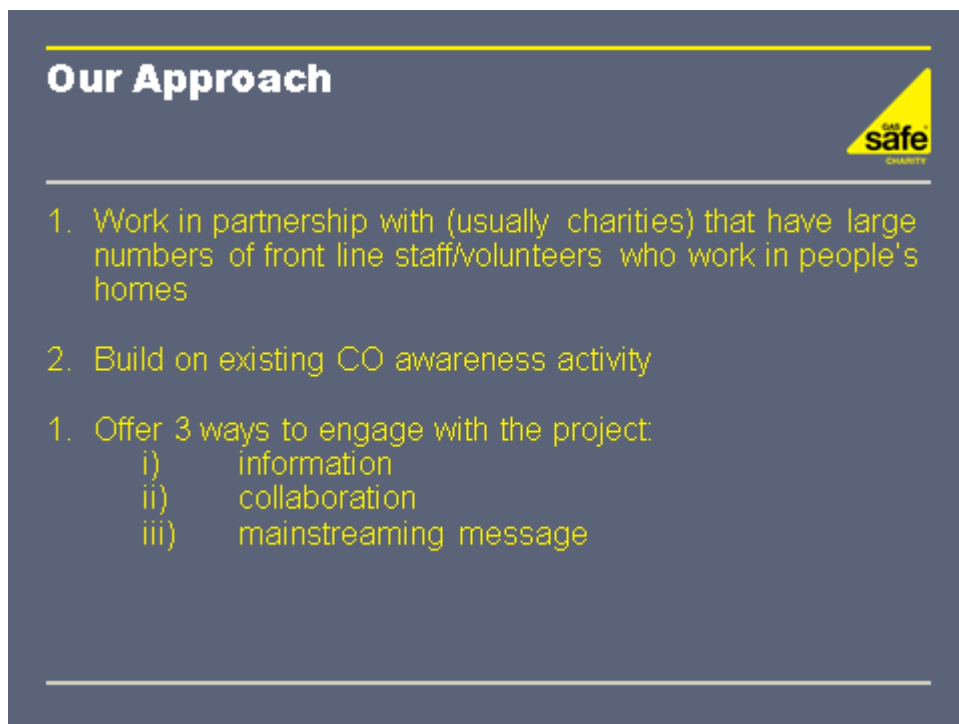
**AP2: Daniel to be invited to the next meeting to share with members the full Report once finalised.**

#### 4. Bath & Main Associates.

Hilary and Simon introduced the meeting to the work they have been commissioned to promote Carbon Monoxide Awareness. Any death through CM poisoning is unacceptable as is the number of people who are hospitalised. Last year this was around 4K. There are considerable Public Health issues that need to be addressed,

Their full presentation can be viewed [here](#).

A snapshot of their approach can be seen here.



**Our Approach**

gas safe  
CHARITY

1. Work in partnership with (usually charities) that have large numbers of front line staff/volunteers who work in people's homes
2. Build on existing CO awareness activity
1. Offer 3 ways to engage with the project:
  - i) information
  - ii) collaboration
  - iii) mainstreaming message

And their specific offer is shown on the following slide..

## The Offer



Engagement level	Activity
Information	Agreed text to be slotted into newsletter, web site, presentation, training leaflet, fact sheet or social media
Basic training (Collaboration)	15 minute stand alone presentation including script with key messages on CO causes, symptoms and action
CO Champions (Mainstreaming)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>2-3 hours interactive session to cascade message via "train the trainers" approach</li><li>Pledge personal action</li></ul>

Hilary and Simon confirmed that have already made great progress in working with the Red Cross, Age UK and a range of key stakeholders, but there were still opportunities to work with partners on the Project. They would welcome the opportunity to work with interested Alliance members. Their next steps slide sets out their programme over the coming months.

## Next steps



1. Pilot training packages (February)
2. Deliver training (March - September)
3. Refine messages and address issues as they arise
4. Increase the network of contacts and CO Partners across UK
5. Develop links to statutory agencies for the future

**AP3: Hilary and Simon to provide Russell with some text that sets out their specific “ask” of Alliance Members. The Alliance Secretariat will target the communication as required.**

## **5. Robbie Stevenson SGN.**

Robbie introduced the meeting to work of SGN. Often overlooked is the role The Gas Distribution Networks plays as an integral part in the supply of gas to the UK.

Robbie’s full presentation can be viewed [here](#).

The following slide provides more background information on SGN.



The slide titled "About SGN" features a purple-to-orange gradient background. On the left, there is a list of key facts: "Formed in 2005, SGN operates 75,000km of gas mains and services", "We are the second largest gas distribution company in the UK", "We provide a safe and secure supply of natural gas to 5.8 million customers", "We have a Regulatory Asset Value of £4.9bn", and "Our workforce includes c.4,000 direct staff and 2,000 contractors". Below this text is the slogan "IT'S YOUR GAS, BUT IT'S OUR NETWORK" and the SGN logo. On the right, a map of the UK shows SGN gas networks in blue, covering Scotland and parts of the South of England, with specific locations marked: Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Oxford, London, and Southampton.

Robbie outlined the Help to Heat Strategy that the company is leading on. The strategy aims to: -

- Provide free or discounted gas connections to vulnerable and low-income households
- To deliver 20,000 connections in their network areas (11,000 in Scotland and 9,000 in Southern). The Scheme will run between 2013-2021.

Robbie was able to provide examples of some significant savings SGN has managed to achieve through the provision of connection to the gas main. He


cited an example of some work recently undertaken in Bournemouth where free provision to over 600 Council owned homes had delivered savings of circa £1m. **The Company is very keen to explore similar opportunities with Local Authorities.**

The qualifying conditions for the Help to Heat programme is set out in the following slide.

**Qualifying**

**A household is eligible if the applicant qualifies under one of the following:**

- Live in one of the <20% most deprived areas as per the Index of Multiple Deprivation
- OR**
- Qualify under certain income-related benefits
- OR**
- Over 70 years old
- OR**
- Living in fuel poverty based on the current government definition

 **SGN**

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SGN is also looking to innovate and produce products that improve fuel efficiency, reducing the oxygen build up in the system and removing lime scale in domestic pipes are but two smaller examples.

Robbie confirmed that he will represent the Gas Distribution Networks at future meetings and was keen to work in partnership where appropriate.

The GDN's work in collaboration and other companies offer similar initiatives aimed at helping vulnerable households. Ofgem's website shows the geographical areas of the 4 companies, the others are Northern Gas Networks, National Grid Affordable Warmth Solutions and Wales and West Utilities.

## **6. Pam Wynne – DECC update – Big Energy Saving Network.**

Pam confirmed that this winter over 2 million households will have benefited from a £140 reduction in their electricity bill through the Warm Home Discount scheme.

You qualify for the discount if on 12 July 2014 all of the following apply:

- your supplier was part of the scheme
- your name (or your partner's) was on the bill
- you were getting the Guarantee Credit element of [Pension Credit](#) (even if you get Savings Credit as well)

Further work is also on going with the Fuel Poverty Regulations as they make their way through various parliamentary stages. Pam will share with the Working Group when more detail is known/available about a Fuel Poverty Strategy.

### **Big Energy Saving Network.**

**Background.** Over the past year DECC has invested £2m into the Network. Its main focus is to support and train trusted intermediaries – helping individuals and communities to take action – for example switching to a cheaper supplier or taking advantage of free/affordable insulation. Over 170 Champions have been established across England, Scotland and Wales and by December 2014 over 1200 sessions have been held. DECC recently hosted a workshop where they were able to evaluate and share best practice amongst the Champions with lessons learnt being carried forward. This evaluation will be shared with members of the Working Group in due course.

DECC is also looking to hold a workshop in London on 25 Feb that looks at the issue of fuel poverty and the relationship with Health. Pam will provide more details with the Working Group asap.

## **7. AOB**

Steve Crabb introduced himself as the new head of vulnerable customers at British Gas. Reflecting on the earlier discussion Steve outlined some of the company's responses to challenges placed upon the sector by the Regulator. Some of these include better holistic training of its engineers and steps it will be taking to identify vulnerable customers. Steve had not been with British Gas for long so was keen to engage and listen. He has a background of working with vulnerable people/support groups, having previously worked for the Alzheimer's Society and the Dementia Action Alliance.

Steve was very pleased to announce that the Board of British Gas had recently agreed to keep open the Warm Home Discount scheme even though it had met all its set targets. He was also keen for members to continue to promote the British Gas Energy Trust which recently celebrated its 10th Anniversary. Russell pointed out that a recent blog had been posted onto the Alliance Web site. <http://ageactionalliance.org/british-gas-energy-trust-marks-10-years-of-helping-people-out-of-debt/>



Maria confirmed that funding had been secured for another round of energy efficiency workshops. The funding will be available from April. Maria will liaise with Russell on next steps. Agreement reached that we can include material about Carbon Monoxide. Maria also has printed copies of the Fuel Poverty Guide available. If you would like copies simply get in touch with Maria at NEA.

**AP4; Members to contact Maria if they would like copies of the Fuel Poverty Guide.**

### **8. Date of next meeting – Will be in the early summer.**

Agenda items include:

- Review of composition and future focus of the Group: Carried forward as there was insufficient time on this occasion.
- Priority Services Register response to the consultation
- Fuel Poverty Strategy – Latest position.
- Updates from Bath & Main and Daniel Walker Nolan.

As always members are encouraged to submit other items for inclusion.

### **9. Close**

Maria thanked everyone for coming and wished them a safe journey home.