



Half-Year Impact Report

The **Connect for Help** service started operating in July 2020 and we are delighted to announce we have now **helped our 2000th client!** Connect for Help offers low income and vulnerable homes across England and Wales free energy and money advice, along with referrals to other support to reduce their bills and stay warm and well. The ultimate lifetime financial benefit for the 2000 households helped so far will be **close to £1 million.**

Connect for Help is a partnership between **IncomeMax CIC**, the social enterprise that supports families in England and Wales to take control of their finances, and energy efficiency specialists **AgilityEco**. The funding for the service comes from **National Grid's £150 million Warm Homes Fund** which is administered on their behalf by **Affordable Warmth Solutions** and which supports projects tackling fuel poverty across Great Britain.

Connect for Help is available to homeowners, social tenants and people living in privately rented properties. Anyone can receive a free initial review of their situation and the support available to them both locally and nationally. Additional in-depth help is available for those on low incomes, or with health conditions or other vulnerabilities.

A particular specialism of the service is helping households understand what grants are available for heating and insulation measures. Connect for Help is supporting them to access fully-funded central heating and new gas connections through other Warm Homes Fund projects.

Connect for Help already has a number of major referral partners and these are increasing every day, including Housing Associations with thousands of properties across England such as Home Group, Peabody Housing Association and Guinness Housing Partnership. Throughout the second quarter the Connect for Help team has trained hundreds of their staff about the Connect for Help programme through multiple online training sessions.

Throughout the last six months, the Connect for Help team have delivered numerous outcomes for our clients, including the below key areas of support:

Number of clients who received an in-depth energy advice call	345
Number of clients referred to IncomeMAX for financial advice & support	268
Number of clients registered for Warm Homes Discount or PSR with their supplier	138
Number of clients supported with energy bill or tariff switching advice	253

We've also had some great feedback from our clients. Here is an example of the level of support that Connect for Help offers and the difference it can make:

Ms T from the Isle of Wight lives alone in a flat suffering from cold draughts. She receives universal credit and is on a low income which has resulted in her struggling to pay her bills and falling into council tax arrears. She also explained that she currently pays on receipt of her bill and doesn't have a smart meter to monitor her usage. An experienced Connect for Help advisor spent time with her on an in-depth call to provide useful advice and support. The advisor spoke to her about switching to the best tariff and arranging to pay by direct debit with her supplier British Gas, as well as asking her supplier to install 2nd generation smart meters, so that she will no longer receive estimated bills. The advisor also referred Ms T to IncomeMax for support with her council tax arrears and fuel debt concerns, whilst also speaking to her about the Priority Services Register and giving advice around how to keep her home adequately heated, including in-depth advice on correctly setting her radiator TRVs and how to prevent some issues she was experiencing with draughts coming into her home.

Following her in-depth call with our Connect for Help advisor, Ms T contacted our team to say ***"I just want to tell you how brilliant the service is and to thank you for your time and weblinks you told me about. I was on the phone with British Gas today. I signed up for direct debit and switched tariffs within British Gas, netting an annual savings dual fuel of over £600! I would not have done it without your advice and support. Thank you so much for the holiday gift!"***

Within the Connect for Help programme we are increasing the capacity further in response to the expected increase in demand in 2021, as we see the continued effects of Covid-19 on residents' income, financial security and wellbeing, as well as increased utility bills due to lockdowns and home-schooling. Some households will be needing assistance for the first time and will not know where to turn, so we are increasing our promotion efforts through our current and new referral networks, to ensure residents know that Connect for Help is here to help all year round.

It's easy to access Connect for Help directly or to refer someone else. Just visit www.connectforhelp.org.uk or call our expert team on **0800 029 4548**



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