

Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers - Type I Summary Audit Report

February 2010

Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project

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1 INTRODUCTION AND AUDIT OUTCOME

Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project (DEEAP) is situated within Dundee City Council, Housing Investment Unit, 1 Shore Terrace, Dundee, DD1 3AH. The service is provided to residents within the City of Dundee.

The project provides free advice on all energy related issues, billing problems, heating demonstrations, energy saving tips, dampness advice and fuel supplier issues. DEEAP also provides an advice service to encourage the take-up of welfare benefits.

The project has been running for 11 years and has 6 members of staff (3 funded through the Fairer Scotland Fund and 3 through the Dundee City Council Housing budget). DEEAP hope to gain additional staff due to the continual increase in demand for the service. On average the project deals with 3000 home visits per year and receives many telephone contacts for advice and assistance.

The remit of the service is:

- To eradicate fuel poverty and provide warm homes for tenants.
- To carry out income maximisation processes and procedures and refer to appropriate agencies for follow-up.

1.1 AUDIT OUTCOME

The on-site audit visit took place on 21st January 2010.

Following the audit visit, it was concluded that the advice service provided by Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project meets the requirements of the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers (the Standards).

Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project is accredited to the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers in the topics and for the types of service shown below until February 2014

Money and welfare benefits topics accredited

	Applied for	Accredited
4.1 Means-Tested Benefits		
4.2 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit		
4.3 Tax Credits		
4.4 The Social Fund		
4.5 The Impact of Work on Benefits		

4.6 Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance		
4.7 State Retirement Pension		
4.8 Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance		
4.9 Benefits for People who are Incapable of Work		
4.10 Benefits for Work-Related Illnesses and Disabilities		
4.11 Benefits for Veterans		
4.12 Carer's Allowance		
4.13 Jobseeker's Allowance		
4.14 Benefits for Maternity, Paternity and Adoption		
4.15 Bereavements Benefit		
4.16 Benefits for People in Public Care		
4.17 Benefits for Students		
4.18 Benefits for People from Abroad and/or who are Subject to Immigration Control		
4.19 Ancillary Benefits		
4.20 Financial Statements		
4.21 Liability for Debts, Extortionate Credit, Unfair Contract Terms, Unenforceable Debts, Creditor Malpractice, Codes of Practice, etc		
4.22 Identifying and Agreeing Options in Debt Cases		
4.23 Negotiating and Making Offers to Creditors		
4.24 Diligence, Diligence Stoppers and Court Proceedings		
4.25 Bankruptcy and Sequestration, Voluntary Trust Deeds		
4.26 Recalls and Appeals against Court Decrees and Orders		
4.27 Utility Debts		
4.28 Local and National Tax Debts		

4.29 Rent Arrears		
4.30 Mortgages and Secured Loans		
4.31 Civil and Criminal fines and other Financial Penalties		
4.32 Business Debts		

2 AUDIT FINDINGS

2.1 STRENGTHS

There is a good internal communications culture within the project and staff are well motivated and committed. The Senior Energy Adviser is very positive and forward thinking and it was apparent during the audit that an open door policy operates for staff to discuss any issues arising. There is very much a team ethos with everyone being involved in team discussions. Team meetings are held on a monthly basis and minutes from the meetings showed that the agenda is well structured including current issues, procedures, training etc. and that staff have effective input to these meetings.

Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project delivers an effective service and it is evident that all staff involved in the service delivery are aware of the purpose of the project, who the service is for and the type of service the project provides.

Regardless of the reason for contacting the project, a benefit check will be offered to the client thereby ensuring that income is maximised in all cases.

2.2 AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS - Quality of Advice

a) Reference Materials

Recommendation: Outdated reference books should be labelled, 'for reference only', thus ensuring that the current information source is always used.

(Standard 4.2)

b) Referral System

Recommendation: The 'CATS' referral system should be modified to produce results prioritised by relevance.

(Standard 4.3)

c) Supervision

Recommendation: Current supervision arrangements should be formalised into an appropriate procedure.

(Standards 5.5, 5.6)

3 GOOD PRACTICE

4.1

When a tenant is allocated a property, the project send out a letter when the tenant has moved in offering a visit to discuss heating systems, offers available, services provided, etc. The auditor felt that this was very pro-active and was an effective education and information intervention. This could prevent tenants getting into fuel arrears and also serve to maximise income at an early stage.