



PRESS RELEASE

BRISTOL LORD MAYOR CELEBRATES WITH LOCAL DEBT AND ENERGY ADVICE CHARITY ON THEIR NATIONAL 'HEAT HEROES' AWARD

The staff and Trustees at Talking Money were delighted to welcome The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor and her Consort, Dr Ian Champion-Smith, to their offices, where they joined the charity in celebrating the receipt of two National Energy Action *Heat Heroes* Awards.

Sylwia Kulaczowska and Aisha Sterling, both Advisors in Talking Money's Energy Advice Project, received their awards at a ceremony held at Westminster on 30th June for their outstanding performance in helping people in their community who are struggling to keep warm in their homes. They work to alleviate fuel poverty across different communities in Bristol and provide energy efficiency advice, help to maximise income and reduce debt over the phone and in person.

National Energy Action (NEA) is a national charity that aims to eradicate fuel poverty and campaigns for greater investment in energy efficiency to help those who are poor and vulnerable. Its annual *Heat Heroes* Award scheme, sponsored by ScottishPower, recognises individuals within communities in England and Wales who have made a significant contribution to helping those struggling with the effects of fuel poverty.

Kerry McCarthy, Labour MP for Bristol East said "I am delighted that we have people like Aisha and Sylwia working to help vulnerable people in Bristol East."

Gillian Noble, Head of Energy Services and Obligations, ScottishPower Retail and Generation said: "We are proud to be sponsoring the Heat Heroes Awards for a fourth year. The hard work and commitment shown by these dedicated people within their communities is crucially important in helping to tackle fuel poverty. On behalf of ScottishPower I'd like to congratulate all the nominees and winners."

Energy Advice Project Manager at Talking Money, Rhianne Cotterill, said "I am delighted that two of my colleagues have been named Heat Heroes by NEA and ScottishPower. The work they do to help people in the local community to stay warm in their homes is vitally important and it's fantastic that they've received recognition for their hard work."

In the last year Sylwia and Aisha have given advice and support to individuals and households at risk of or suffering from fuel poverty. They have submitted more than 200 charitable applications on behalf of their clients to the British Gas and EDF Energy Trusts, clearing an astonishing £197,250 of gas and electricity arrears. They also jointly hold the Energy Advice Project's record for highest individual charity award, securing a grant of £9,562 for one client.

Maria Wardrobe, Director of External Affairs, NEA said: "Over 4.5 million UK households live in fuel poverty and are unable to adequately heat their homes. Our Heat Heroes are working tirelessly to improve the lives of these people and it is important that we give credit to those like Aisha and Sylwia who are working to tackle fuel poverty within their community."

As well as charitable applications, Aisha and Sylwia provide one to one energy tariff and efficiency advice to local people in Bristol in order to help them maximise their incomes and combat fuel poverty, a serious issue for a large number of individuals and families living in Bristol.

Receiving the Heat Heroes awards is a great opportunity for Talking Money to celebrate the work its Energy Advice Project does to help local individuals and families change their lives by reducing the impact of fuel poverty and debt in Bristol.

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Notes to editors:

- National Energy Action (NEA) is the national charity which aims to eradicate fuel poverty and campaigns for greater investment in energy efficiency to help those who are poor and vulnerable <http://www.nea.org.uk/>
- The Heat Heroes Award was presented at a celebratory event in London by Baroness Maddock, Vice President of NEA on the 30th June 2015
- A household is thought to be in fuel poverty if: their income is below the poverty line (taking into account energy costs), and their energy costs are higher than is typical for their household type
- The latest estimates indicate that 2.39 million households are deemed to be living in fuel poverty in England ([Department of Energy & Climate Change 2011](#))
- Talking Money, formerly known as Bristol Debt Advice Centre, has been offering free independent advice for over 25 years. Services include specialist debt advice, energy advice, benefits advice, support with managing money and a self-help area
- The Energy Advice Project ran by Talking Money is funded by British Gas Energy Trust, EDF Energy Trust, Bristol Green Capital and Awards for All

- The NEA Heat Heroes Awards is supported by Scottish Power and aims to recognise individuals within communities in England and Wales who have made a significant contribution to helping those struggling with the effects of fuel poverty. For further information on the scheme and winners visit <http://www.nea.org.uk/campaigns-events/heat-heroes>
- Talking Money is a registered charity funded by grants and voluntary contributions. To find out more about our work, please visit www.talkingmoney.org.uk or contact us on 0117 954 3990 or mail@talkingmoney.org.uk