

THAW Orkney

Energy Advice Benefits Case Study



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About THAW Orkney

THAW Orkney is an independent local charity who work for households in all Orkney communities to reduce levels of fuel poverty and achieve affordable warmth.

THAW offer free impartial advice to help support people with energy-related queries, including tariff switching, income maximisation and benefits. They help people in vulnerable circumstances who find it difficult to heat their home, struggle with energy bills, and need further assistance with energy matters.

BGET Project

With funding from the British Gas Energy Trust, THAW have a dedicated team in place to provide a bespoke service which can involve hand-holding support if required. THAW can also advocate and act as a third party on someone's behalf to speak to suppliers about bills and switching.

About the client

- The client was referred to THAW by Victim Support, the charity supporting people affected by crime or trauma
- She is single, a social housing tenant and claiming disability benefits. Living in poverty, she has poor mental health and regularly has referrals to foodbanks
- The client had previously engaged with THAW where she had been supported with energy advice and efficiency measures



Case Study highlights

Date opened: June
2020

Date Closed:
Ongoing

Time (months): 5
months

**Caseworker Welfare
Support and
Community Care
Officer:**

All work carried out
remotely from home
during Covid-19

The work

- As the referral was received during Covid-19 lockdown the interactions mainly took place over the telephone
- As the client was in a crisis a £30 emergency electricity voucher was provided, which she redeemed the same day
- Several calls were made to obtain the clients' agreement to accept budgeting support. She already was in receipt of full benefit income
- It was established that she was re-paying debts but not meeting all ongoing bills and she was paying high veterinary bills
- An application was made for support with vets bills from the Vet Aid charity and £180 was awarded
- THAW worked with the client to establish how she could manage money better to prevent further debt building up
- A referral to Home Energy Scotland was made, who provided further energy advice and a further fuel voucher
- THAW applied for a Community Care Grant, and the client was awarded a new mattress and flooring
- Mental health support was also provided by the THAW Community Support Officer Client
- Ongoing work includes support negotiating utility arrears of £2,700 on the client's behalf

Client Outcomes

- Accessing the help she needs
- Increased confidence and budgeting skills
- A warmer and better furnished home
- Increased disposable income
- Debt repaid and reduced bills
- Increased energy awareness
- Improved engagement, support and connection with the community

Project Outcomes

- Budget Planning - ongoing work with client to assist with budgeting
- Benefit Checks - maximising all income and support with her home - Scottish Welfare Fund Community Care Grant successfully obtained
- Debt management - veterinary debt reduced by £185
- Emergency fuel vouchers provided
- Referral to Home Energy Scotland for energy advice
- Ongoing advocacy support – to reduce £2,700 utility debt to affordable level
- Mental health support provided

The effectiveness of THAW

The client has expressed her appreciation for the kindness, help and support provided to her - especially at her lowest point when she was feeling very vulnerable and alone during lockdown.

Prior to THAW's intervention she had been struggling to manage her benefit income and did not understand which debts to prioritise. Her financial situation and confidence with money has now improved.

She is now gaining control of her financial situation and remains engaged with THAW who continue to support her.