



“ After being put in touch with WHAM regarding my heating problems, I was very impressed with the professional way it was handled. Joe Pitt was always easy to talk to and got all the problems sorted out. Without this financial support I don't know what I would have done. Being diagnosed with a life changing illness was awful, but the support I received was amazing. Thank you all very much.”

Jane, Clevedon

Jane Lowe of Clevedon was referred to WHAM by Citizen's Advice North Somerset as her boiler was intermittently breaking and her gas bills were high. She had no hot water and most of the radiators in the house weren't working. As Jane suffers from severe osteoporosis her mobility is worsening and she needs more heat than she used to.

Three home visits were undertaken.

WHAM fuel poverty advisor, Joe Pitt, takes up the story ...

“On my first visit I had a look at the boiler and the radiators. There were no obvious issues with the controls so I referred her to We Care for a free boiler service. This turned the hot water back on but it left the heating on constantly and it turned out that there were repairs needed to a valve and the pump, which were not covered by the service. Jane was already worried about the cost of her bills as she is on a low income and having the boiler running so much was a real source of stress for her.

“Many of the radiators weren't working and the TRVs would not move when I tried to turn them. I referred to AMS electrical for this issue, they came out and managed to unstick the TRVs which got the radiators working again.

“In addition to the boiler issues, on the first visit I also looked at the energy bills with Jane. She was on a prepayment meter with British Gas and was finding

it hard to get to the shops to top up, she wanted to switch to direct debits but wasn't sure whether this was possible. We called British Gas and arranged a date for a meter exchange to a smart credit meter. Jane also hadn't heard of the Warm Home Discount, so I explained the application process to her and also applied for her.

"Between visits, I referred Jane to the E.ON ECO scheme for a new boiler, as there were major maintenance issues with her existing one and it was over 15 years old and inefficient. A ECO grant covered most of the cost of the boiler installation leaving a householder contribution of £711.08 which Jane could not afford. This cost was able to be covered by the WHAM emergency fund.

"On my second visit, Jane had had her new smart credit meter installed. She wanted to be on the best value direct debit tariff and stay with British Gas, so we found her a new contract fixed tariff with British Gas, saving £230 annually. This contract also included a year of free heating repair callouts, which Jane needed to use on Christmas eve when her boiler stopped working.

"After Christmas, the new boiler was installed and I visited again to explain how to use the programmer and thermostat and what temperature it would be sensible to set it at. I also helped her communicate with GasTech Wales (who installed the boiler) to arrange for them to revisit to complete a few jobs which had not been fully completed on the day of the install."



Joe Pitt

KEY OUTCOMES

Through WHAM, Jane benefitted in the following ways:

- She received a free boiler service which would normally cost £78, and following this a free new boiler installation (which saved her £2900 through ECO funding and £711.08 through WHAM emergency funding), and crucially made her home warmer and lowered her ongoing fuel bills, making her feel much more at ease.
- She gained a better understanding of tariffs, billing and getting the best from her supplier. She switched to a smart credit meter which is much more convenient for her, and also applied for the Warm Home Discount (which she can now do on a yearly basis). She also saved £230 by changing tariff, and benefitted from a free boiler repair through this tariff too.
- She now has working radiators due to AMS Electrical (the council's handyperson service) visiting to unstick the TRVs, which was free for the client due to WHAM funding.
- And finally she is able to fully understand how to efficiently control her heating, making sure she is comfortably warm when it's needed and she is able to save money on her annual fuel bill.



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