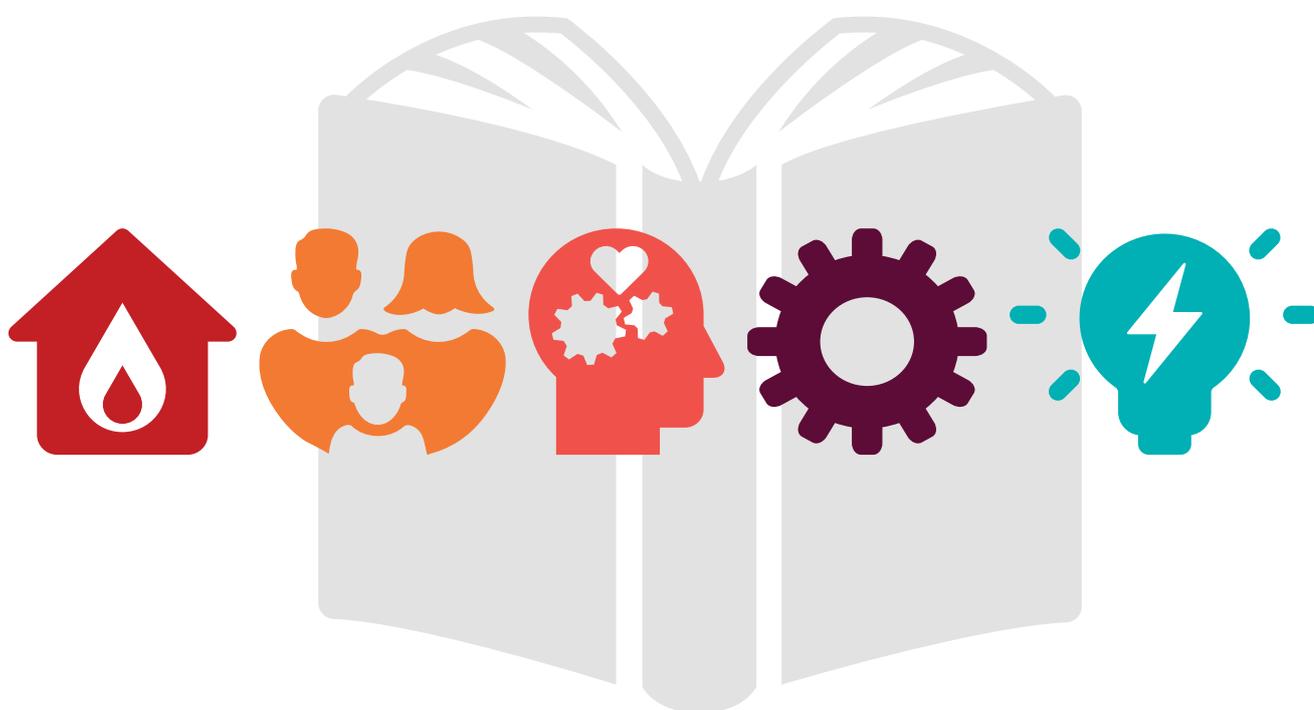




University of
Salford
MANCHESTER



SHUSU
SUSTAINABLE HOUSING
& URBAN STUDIES UNIT

Supporting Researchers, Securing Impact

A Survey of Fuel Poverty Researchers
funded by the Eaga Charitable Trust

Graeme Sherriff

October 2019



The Archive and Legacy Project

This study is part of the Archive and Legacy Project. This brought together the 25-year output of Eaga Charitable Trust and looked to the future of research in the field. The centre piece of the project is an online library of fuel poverty research: www.fuelpovertylibrary.info.

About the authors

The Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) is a dedicated multi-disciplinary research and consultancy unit providing a range of services relating to housing and urban management to public and private sector clients. The Unit brings together researchers drawn from a range of disciplines including: social policy, housing management, urban geography, environmental management, psychology, social care and social work.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the respondents to the survey. They would also like to thank Eaga Charitable Trust for financial support and for the constructive involvement of its members in the formation of the research.

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Research Impact	3
3. Research Careers	6
4. Wide-ranging Support	8

1. Introduction

As part of a project to bring together the legacy of Eaga Charitable Trust, we contacted individuals who had received funding from the Trust during its 25-year life. Our survey sought to find out how the funding had impacted their careers and, in turn, how the research had influenced policy and contributed to the development of fuel poverty research.

Obtaining contact details for and reaching people who had been working up to 25 years ago was challenging. Many had moved on to other organisations, to other endeavours, or retirement. We received replies from 26 funding recipients and this report provides a summary of those responses.

The responses evidence a weight of impact upon the careers of the researchers, supporting them to complete their research, presenting it to a wide range of stakeholders and to feel part of a wider fuel poverty research community. The research itself has had substantial impact upon fuel poverty policy and the development of the field.

Where appropriate, we provide links to the funded projects in the Fuel Poverty Research Library (www.fuelpovertylibrary.info). This online library was set up as part of the project to make the entire output of the Trust available.

2. Research Impact

‘It is always difficult to attribute policy interventions to specific pieces of research. However, all of the Eaga CT funded research projects have made a significant contribution towards making the case for reform.’ William Baker, Citizens Advice

As this respondent states, it is challenging to attribute changes in policy to specific pieces of research. Often it is more the case that the gradual accumulation of evidence and growing prominence of particular arguments combine to bring about change over time. Over its 25 years, Eaga Charitable Trust research has added to that groundswell of evidence and, as these researcher reflections show, has often achieved prominence in Government, local government and other centres of decision-making. Whilst this has mostly been the case within the United Kingdom (UK), there is also evidence of impact internationally. This report gives examples, drawing from statements provided by the researchers, and quoting them directly where appropriate.

Research on the private rented sector by Aimee Ambrose, Lindsey McCarthy and James Pinder ([Project 106](#)) of Sheffield Hallam University was presented to a range of fora internationally. Aimee Ambrose recounted that, ***‘the report has been presented to the Scottish Government, in the Scottish Parliament and in presentations around the world. It has shaped research and policy agendas in New Zealand and Australia and has come to the attention of governments around the world through its inclusion in International Energy Agency (IEA) publications’***. The IEA referenced it in reports linked to their ‘Task 24’ on Changing Energy Behaviour. Related work in New Zealand has contributed to an evidence base underpinning legislative reform around the introduction of minimum quality standard in the New Zealand private rented sector for the first time.

Another example of international work is a project by Andreas Scheller, of Adelphi, to understand the prevalence of fuel poverty in Germany ([Project 100](#)) including a comparative analysis of fuel poverty in Germany and the UK. According to Andreas, ***‘the research raised awareness that there is a lack of appropriate fuel poverty policies in Germany’***. [A German language summary of the research](#) was published by think tank Adelphi.

Research by Brenda Boardman and Geoffrey Milne at the University of Oxford Environmental Change Unit ([Project 7](#)) investigated the effect of energy efficiency improvements in low-income homes. Brenda Boardman recalled that the research ***‘demonstrated that the energy savings in a home achieved as a result of an energy efficiency improvement were dependent on the temperature in the home before the work started: more savings in previously cold homes than previously warmer homes’***. It also demonstrated, she continued, ***‘the importance of extremely detailed datasets and careful analysis’*** and ***‘may have helped to identify the depth of fuel poverty in some homes and reinforce the need to focus on those suffering the most’***. The research was published in [Energy Policy](#).

Research by William Baker at Centre for Sustainable Energy ([Project 34](#) and [65](#)) helped to establish the need for small area statistics as part of efforts to understand rural fuel poverty. William Baker shared his thoughts on potential impact, highlighting the creation of UK initiatives focused on rural fuel poverty in England; the Scottish and Welsh government including more far-reaching schemes within their publicly funded fuel poverty programmes; and local authorities now regularly using small area fuel poverty statistics to target their programme. William Baker reported that The Welsh Government subsequently commissioned himself and a colleague to produce a small area fuel poverty indicator for Wales: ***‘we also ‘doubled’ the level of fuel poverty in Wales - our research resulted in a more realistic assessment of fuel poverty levels compared to the Welsh Government’s previous methodology.’***

Another piece of research by William Baker at Centre for Sustainable Energy highlighted the distributional nature of liberalised markets ([Project 23](#)). The work was referred to in research reports and bulletins and these were frequently quoted in parliamentary debate. The research was also presented at a European conference on liberalised energy markets.

A collaborative project between The Children’s Society and the Association for the Conservation of Energy (ACE) focused on promoting take-up of fuel poverty assistance among families with children. Undertaken by Sarah Royston, Sam Royston and Petro Guertler, the project ([Project 95](#)) was referred to by National Audit Office in energy audits. Sarah Royston reflected that: ***‘We discussed the findings in detail with the partner***

charity, and understand that they found them helpful in informing their service provision. The Eaga project also led directly to a further research project funded by a corporate partner, which built on the Eaga project's findings and methods'. The project was cited in an article in journal Energies.

A project by Keith Baker, Ron Mould of Glasgow Caledonian University and Scott Restrict of Energy Action Scotland on fuel poverty in rural and island Scotland ([Project 102](#)) was cited in a number of policy reports in Scotland. Keith Baker commented that **'our work has been.... acknowledged up front in the academic panel review of the definition for the Scottish Government. In Dec 2018 I was called to give verbal evidence on the FP Bill. The Bill is currently at Stage 3 and we are facing pretty strong resistance to our ideas but the battle's not over yet! It also underpins our research and lobbying on related policies and proposals'**. He stated that he continues to present evidence on the benefits of providing face-to-face and in-home support to fuel poor and otherwise vulnerable households. The work also led to the formation of the Energy Poverty Research Initiative.

A project by Ben Wheeler and Richard Sharpe at the University of Exeter Medical School looking into the impact of indoor air quality on health and evaluating the impact of new energy efficiency policies on health ([Project 112](#)) informed local authority policy and practice and the development of a Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) toolkit. It also led to a presentation at a Public Health England Conference and featured in an article in [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#).

Findings from a study on the impact of domestic energy efficiency policies on the fuel poor with particular focus on disabled people and low income families ([Project 90](#)), by Carolyn Snell, Mark Bevan, and Harriet Thomson at the University of York, were used in the development

of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's (NICE) [guidelines on excess winter deaths and illness associated with cold homes \(NG6\)](#) and these guidelines have subsequently been used at both the national and local policy level by health-related bodies.

Research by Tessa Clark at Changeworks was able to feed directly into policy debates in Scotland on metering and billing in district heating ([Project 99](#)), in part by directly liaising with stakeholders: **'I think we were able to feed into a really important debate and dialogue about this topic, particularly in Scotland'**.

Research by Changeworks on Solar PV ([Project 94](#)) fed into a discourse emphasising the importance of behaviour change, providing a practical benefit to social housing providers, and, by extension, social landlords. Tessa Clark commented that **'the strength of our research was that it brought real data to the table and that was really worthwhile in demonstrating just how important tenant engagement was. I do think over the last few years, social landlords (and other stakeholders) have realised the importance of behaviour change and I think our solar PV research had a role to play in that.'**

Danielle Butler of University of Salford received funding for her Master's dissertation and this work was recognised by local government: **'Our published work (2017) was one of a small number of studies cited in a local government publication highlighting key lessons from fuel poverty research, including emphasising the importance of understanding lived experiences and adopting a 'bottom up' approach'**. The research also led to an article in a special issue of [Indoor and Built Environment](#).

'The Health of the Nation' ([Project 107](#)) by Sarah Fletcher of Lewisham Council and Liz Warren of SE2 limited, investigated the cost-effectiveness and success factors of health-related fuel poverty schemes. It was referenced in the National Energy Action (NEA) report

'Under One Roof'. Researchers partially attributed national policy and scheme design to the influence of their work, which considered the reality of delivery by local authorities. Liz Warren commented that **'local authorities have subsequently told us that they have referred to the "Health of the Nation" report and guidance in the design of their schemes, [and] a regional fuel poverty grant and support programme used the Health of the Nation guidance about monitoring and evaluation to develop its processes.'** Furthermore, this research was seen to have influenced Greater London Authority funding and the delivery of fuel poverty support across London.

Jenni Cauvain of University of Manchester and David Weatherall of Future Climate looked into houses of multiple occupancy ([Project 98](#)). The researchers were invited to a Nottingham City Council Fuel Poverty sub-committee meeting to discuss their research and dissemination included running workshops for local authorities. Jenni Cauvain commented: **'I am pleased to say Nottingham has been very active in introducing additional measures to regulate private sector landlords, our Eaga funded work made very detailed policy recommendations on this.'** The project also led to engagement with national Government: **'with our research partners Future Climate, we engaged with decision makers and a Private Members' Bill was tabled in Parliament to close the loophole we identified around energy efficiency requirements in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). Unfortunately, the Bill was voted down in Parliament.'**

Research on interventions carried out in social housing was undertaken by James Bolt, Ian F Mackenzie, David Miles, Pat Owen, and Margaret Somerville ([Project 30](#)) of Public Health Medicine Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly Health Authority. Ian Mackenzie commented that it **'highlighted and underpinned with research the value of tackling fuel poverty on health'**. The research also **'influenced public health priorities for**

local councils, housing associations and the NHS'. The project resulted in an [article in Public Health](#).

[Project 109](#) by Richard Moore (Independent Energy Consultant) and Bill Wilkinson and Kevin Jobson of the Energy Audit Company investigated the potential for a modified tool that would help make the Low Income High Cost (LIHC) measure more relevant for local data requirements. The authors report that the fuel poverty assessment tool has continued to be used by the Energy Audit Company. This comment by the authors perhaps sums up the challenge inherent to ascertaining the impact of academic research: **'Despite meetings with BEIS on the research, no significant changes have been made to the official LIHC definition of fuel poverty or the FP strategy.'**

The Winter Warmer Project by Jane Pettingell of Generate Opportunities ([Project 88](#)), which explored the way people with learning disabilities made decisions about home energy, proved insightful to frontline staff and led to an increased awareness of the challenges associated with living independently for those with a learning disability. One of the impacts was increased awareness amongst the author's staff team and further influence on local practices by reaching out to local care workers to ensure they **'thought through best options for saving fuel and paying for energy'**. Whilst the impact was largely locally bounded, Jane Pettingell commented that the project **'raised awareness locally for the period during and just after the research project'**.

3. Research Careers

Many researchers expressed gratitude to Eaga Charitable Trust for the role that the charity played in conferring substantive professional development to them, especially at the early stages of their research career. Frequently, the financial and interpersonal support provided by Eaga Charitable Trust was seen as providing a highly advantageous foundation at the advent of the researcher's chosen career path in fuel poverty research.

'Advice into Action' got me started! I went on to a doctorate, supervised by Brenda Boardman, and have worked in energy research and (a little) teaching ever since.'

Sarah Darby, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford ([Project 17](#))

'I gained valuable experience of qualitative evaluation research, including skills in research management, budget management and reporting.'

Sarah Royston, Anglia Ruskin University ([Project 95](#))

'Through raising my profile as a researcher, I sat on the Local Authority's committee to revise the recent Affordable Warmth Strategy'

'I have been fortunate enough to receive funding from the Eaga Charitable Trust on a number of occasions over my five years as a postgraduate researcher in the field of fuel poverty. This has enabled me to fund periods of writing, to attend conferences, present at and participate in workshops and other events, and to meet others in the field. Without the Trust, I am certain that I wouldn't have achieved what I have to date or established many of the strong professional relationships with others in the field that I have.'

Danielle Butler, Salford University ([Project 115](#))

'Support from Eaga allowed me to start my research career. I am still working in research which has been partly due to the support of Eaga.'

Sarah Sullivan, University of Bristol ([Project 36](#))

'Eaga CT has provided invaluable support to me in progressing my research and my research career.... It has shaped research and policy agendas in New Zealand and Australia and has come to the attention of governments around the world through its inclusion in International Energy Agency publications. For me personally, this exposure has been a huge boost to my career and profile and has also enabled me to shine light on an injustice that I feel strongly about.'

Aimee Ambrose, Sheffield Hallam University ([Project 36](#))

'Being part of an Eaga funded, relatively short project on fuel poverty / energy vulnerability in HMO sector, opened many opportunities for me. I subsequently won a small award to investigate retrofit in social housing, and have had many publications in this broad field which helped me secure a fellowship in urban social sustainability at Nottingham. What is more, staying in touch with the wider network of fuel poverty researchers is very important from a professional development perspective.'

Jenni Cauvain (nee Viitanen) University of Nottingham and DeMontfort University ([Project 98](#))

'The grant provided by EAGA Charitable Trust was a generous and very helpful support in a critical time of my early stage research. It enabled me to carry out Independent research, gave me the opportunity to do field studies and helped me to pursue my career. Without the grant I would have not focused on fuel poverty research which became my thematic focus area.'

Andreas Schneller, Adelphi ([Project 100](#))

‘This financial support from Eaga Charitable Trust has been essential to carry out my three-month posting with the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford and successfully complete my PhD. During my work at SHUSU I investigated issues related to energy consumption in buildings providing a better understanding of how thermal comfort in buildings differs depending on the climatology characteristics (Spain and England, the typology of householders (income level, household size, cultural level, household age, etc.) and building typologies (single and multi-family buildings). Furthermore, I designed a survey in collaboration with members of the Applied Buildings and Energy Research Group (ABERG) to collect data about households’ health and dwellings’ characteristics and providing an evidence base to better understanding the validity of my research in the British context.’

**Raúl Castaño-Rosa, University of Seville
(Project 111)**

‘The grant has truly shaped my research career for the last 10 years and I would imagine the next 10 years. I am truly disappointed that the trust has to close.’

Carolyn Snell, Social Policy and Social Work, The University of York (Projects 90 and 93)

‘My Eaga-funded MRes was a small project, but led directly to a PhD on fuel poverty and ultimately a career in Government researching inequalities.’

Lauren Probert, Cabinet Office (Project 72)

‘Eaga CT funding was instrumental in funding really important research. The two projects we undertook were in areas where there was little other evidence out there and I think our research really fed into the debate.’

**Tessa Clark, formerly of Changeworks
(Projects 94 and 99)**

‘I have had a very positive experience being involved in fuel poverty research, there is a great network of colleagues in this field which is extremely valuable.’

**Jenni Cauvain (nee Viitanen), University of Nottingham and DeMontfort University
(Project 98)**

‘I no longer work in the area of fuel poverty, but many of the tools and principles we use in our work could be applied to fuel poverty. For instance, decision-making theory, change management, behaviour change, behavioural insights and user engagement.’

**James Pinder, 3edges Workplace Ltd
(Projects 76 and 106)**

4. Wide-ranging Support

Respondents mentioned in particular the support given by Eaga Charitable Trust above and beyond the financial element of the funding.

'In recent months, I've started to have conversations with undergraduate students interested in the work I've done and path I've taken - I hope that they will have access to the same support and opportunities as I have had.'

Danielle Butler, Salford University ([Project 115](#))

'Eaga CT's support for my research projects was invaluable to supporting my career in conducting research, commissioning research and using research outputs to influence policy. I particularly valued the feedback provided by the Trust's manager and trustees on both defining the original objectives for the research and the subsequent research outputs.'

'It helped establish my reputation as a researcher with a strong focus on making the case for reform and to secure funding for larger scale research and evaluation projects. For example, the Warm Zone evaluation received £300,000 funding and was very influential in making the case for area-based approaches to tackling fuel poverty.'

William Baker, Citizens Advice
([Projects 14](#), [34](#), [52](#) and [65](#))

'The trustees were extremely supportive, and I always had the impression that they were as passionate about the research as my team and I.'

'Thanks for the opportunity, I think it has made my career.'

Carolyn Snell, Social Policy and Social Work, The University of York ([Projects 90](#) and [93](#))

'Eaga Charitable Trust were instrumental in supporting the research and evaluation of investments by the NHS through local councils to improve the health of families in poor council accommodation without central heating. The encouragement, support and funding from Eaga CT allowed a leap of faith to become an evidence-based intervention... Eaga CT and their staff were unfailingly supportive and made all of us involved in the research feel that our work was important and relevant.'

Ian Mackenzie, formerly of Cornwall & Isles of Scilly Health Authority ([Project 30](#))

'They have bravely funded research that is exploratory and experimental in nature, which other funders might have avoided. Their investment paid off in so far as it enabled the production of a report offering fresh insights into an enduring but often overlooked aspect of fuel poverty. The findings were shocking and challenging and forced academics and policy makers to sit up and take notice of the plight of private rented sector tenants.'

Aimee Ambrose, Sheffield Hallam University
([Project 36](#))

'The Trust has supported much needed research into a really important topic. The body of evidence built up by this research represents a really important legacy and I guess raises the question of what will fill the gap left by the Trust.'

James Pinder, 3edges Workplace Ltd
([Projects 76](#) and [106](#))

'Funding from Eaga enabled us to conduct a breakthrough project to validate our previous work on the impact of the urban-rural divide in Scotland. This had a number of spin-offs but the most significant was enabling us to explore aspects of vulnerability, which led to us applying complexity science to it and develop our reconceptualisation of the condition, which was published in Nature Energy in 2018.'

Keith Baker, Glasgow Caledonian University
([Project 102](#))

'Without EagaCT fully funding the 'preliminary' Stage 2 of 'An Assessment of LIHC Fuel poverty', the final full Stage 3 project jointly funded by JRF, Citizens Advice, NEA and EagaCT would have been impossible.'

Richard Moore, Housing Consultant – retired
([Project 109](#))

'Eaga CT's main contribution has been in the accumulation of good quality research consistently over the years. I always knew that if the project had been funded by Eaga CT it was likely to be of a high standard and relevant.'

Brenda Boardman, Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford ([Projects 7](#) and [17](#))

'Thank you for helping to highlight an important issue by funding practical research that was supportive to people with a learning disability'

Jane Pettingell, Generate Opportunities
([Project 88](#))

SHUSU
**SUSTAINABLE HOUSING
& URBAN STUDIES UNIT**

The University of Salford
C602 Allerton Building
The Crescent
Salford
M6 6PU
www.salford.ac.uk/shusu

Telephone:
0161 295 2140

Email:
shusu@salford.ac.uk