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## Engagement and empowerment through in-home energy advice: Service impacts on quality of later life

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Low income, high energy costs and home energy efficiency, are key factors in household fuel poverty. Fuel poverty can lead to cold homes. In UK, at least 65 people a day may die of illnesses due to cold homes. This paper reports on findings from a Northumbria University, 3-year qualitative evaluation of the Comic Relief funded, 'Managing Money Better' program, led by a registered credit union and social landlord. Expert energy advisors offered free home visits and gave people aged 50 and over, the tools to reduce and manage energy usage, opportunity to question energy companies about tariff terms and conditions and to ensure maximum take up of benefit entitlements. The evaluation assessed service impacts on older people's quality of life. Findings suggest face-to-face contact with trained advisors, mediating with the energy providers and critically, empowering people through skills acquisition, can lead to real savings, better money management and self-reported decreased levels of worry and anxiety about 'bills running away with themselves'. For those with chronic health conditions, this was particularly valued. The evaluation also found some cheaper energy tariffs may only be digitally available, raising concerns about digital exclusion. Participant views about energy providers were often negative. Governments needs to liaise with energy providers, as those struggling on a low income, need to trust and work with their energy provider to achieve the 'most workable and affordable tariff for them'.

### Biography

Bailey C is an Associate Professor in Ageing, at the Department of Nursing, Midwifery and Health, Northumbria University, UK. Her interests broadly encompass participatory approaches to working with older people, to develop preventative, enabling and cost effective, services and supports. She has managed and supported international and national research projects including those focusing on: health technologies and older adults; social aspects of falls and older adults; creating dementia friendly communities and intergenerational understanding of health and wellbeing.