



Energy case studies

South Seeds' energy officers share some of their cases.

Themes tackled in each case study...

Standing charge, pre payment meters

Emergency vouchers

Estimated readings

Mix up between suppliers

Estimated readings

Erroneous billing

Problems switching

Paying off someone else's debt

Changing tenure

Warm home discount payment

For more information from South Seeds visit
www.southseeds.org



Family left off supply due to standing charge debt

Florian and his wife are both over 60 years old and they live with pre-payment meters for their gas and electricity in privately rented accommodation. Before they embarked on a two week trip away they turned everything off at the wall to minimise spend on energy while they were away. They even turned off their fridge freezer and emptied its contents. They left the property with some money on the pre-payment meters because they knew they would want to turn everything back on when they returned.

When they returned home, they realised that there was no energy because neither the lights nor hot water could be turned on. It was distressing not to have either the gas or electric supply working. Florian was confused as he made sure that he had turned everything off before leaving and knew that there was some money left on the meters. He thought that there must be something wrong in the locality or with the meters. It was winter, so they had to find somewhere else to stay, so they could wash and eat hot food. Luckily they had friends who were willing to assist them.

Florian had received support from South Seeds the previous autumn to enable him to access the energy bill support scheme because he had old style pre-payment meters. Florian popped down to South Seeds to ask for help. South Seeds energy officer, Poppy, was able to fit him in during a no show appointment later that morning.

When Poppy discovered the property had been empty for two weeks, she explained that even if all appliances were turned off in the property, a daily charge would be taken off the balance. This standing charge had totalled more than 14 pounds for electricity and gas. This had put the meters in to debt and Florian was unable at short notice to top up and get back on supply.

Poppy applied for an emergency energy voucher for £49, split between gas and electricity. The voucher helped to get the family back on supply, clear the standing charge debt and move back home.



South Seeds' Energy Advice Service

Call for an appointment on 0141 636 3959 or drop in to 514 Victoria Road, G42 8BG.

South Seeds is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered in Scotland (number: SC042244).



Accessing support during the energy crisis

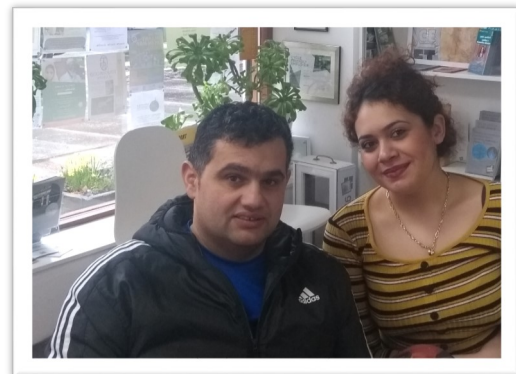
Emil lives with his wife and six children in Govanhill. Emil visited South Seeds in December 2022 as he had heard through friends and family that he could get advice about his energy costs which he was finding very expensive.

Emil booked an appointment with one of South Seeds' energy officers. At the appointment, Myrtle identified that Emil was eligible for the Warm Home Discount, a £150 discount to his electricity bill, and helped him to apply online. This payment doesn't come through until the end of March, so Myrtle also applied for an emergency fuel voucher so the family could keep their gas prepayment meter topped up during a spell of very cold weather at the start of the year.

During the appointment South Seeds energy officer made sure to check if Emil was receiving monthly instalments of the £400 Government energy bill support scheme. Emil confirmed that he had not received any of these payments.

Myrtle booked Emil a second appointment, so they had enough time to call his energy provider to investigate why he hadn't received the vouchers. At

the appointment, Emil's energy supplier explained that the details on the account were not complete and therefore the vouchers hadn't been issued.



South Seeds requested that Emil's information be updated on the company's system and the missing payments be issued as soon as possible. The energy provider advised Emil would receive them in the post within 14 working days. When the vouchers failed to appear, Emil came back to South Seeds. South Seeds called his energy provider to find out what had happened. This time Myrtle requested the vouchers be sent via email to avoid any postal delays.

Emil is unfortunately still waiting to receive the energy bill support scheme vouchers and South Seeds will continue to pursue this.

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TACKLING ESTIMATED BILLS AND FUEL DEBT



Mircea is a young father living with his wife and two children in a privately rented traditional tenement flat in Govanhill. Since moving into the property in 2020, Mircea had been paying his energy bills by direct debit every month. He was not aware that he needed to submit meter readings regularly to his supplier. After being prompted to do so by Scottish Gas, Mircea submitted his first meter reading in December 2021.

He was shocked to receive a bill of more than £2,000 for his gas and electricity. Mircea was unaware his previous bills had been estimated and that his past payments had been too low to cover his usage. With a part-time job and his wife staying at home to care for the children, Mircea was unable to pay this unexpected bill.

Mircea had heard from friends and neighbours that South Seeds could help Govanhill residents with their gas and electricity accounts, so he asked for an appointment with an energy officer. At the appointment, South Seeds' energy officer called up Scottish Gas on Mircea's behalf and set up an affordable repayment plan to help Mircea pay back the money he owed. Unfortunately, Mircea was unable to afford even the lowest repayment plan offered by the supplier.

South Seeds' energy officer, Agnes, suggested getting a prepayment meter which would allow Mircea to pay back a much smaller weekly amount. However, Mircea said he did not like the insecurity of having to go to the shops to top up. The energy officer explained that a smart prepayment meter would allow Mircea to top up directly from his phone, even at home. Mircea was happy with this solution. South Seeds helped Mircea book an appointment for the smart meter installation, and the new meters were fitted within two weeks. During this time, the energy officer had also applied for external funding which helped cover half of the energy debt.

After the smart meter installation, the energy officer went to visit Mircea's home to make sure that he understood how to use the smart monitor. During the visit, the energy officer gave Mircea advice about how to use his gas more efficiently, such as removing clothes from radiators, setting the thermostat, and using the boiler timer. Now, Mircea and his family feel in control of their energy accounts, they can keep track of their usage with the smart monitor, and they are on track to be debt free.

A DISPUTE WITH TWO ENERGY SUPPLIERS



Sophie has lived in her Govanhill Housing Association flat since 2018. The housing association set up an account for Sophie with Scottish Gas, since 2018 she has paid her gas bill to Scottish Gas every month. Scottish Power started to send letters to the property under somebody else's name. As these letters were not addressed to Sophie, she did not open them and would sometimes post them back to the sender. In 2020, the bills from Scottish Power continued to arrive at the property but the name they were addressed to had changed. The name was now similar to Sophie's name, but not correct. Additionally, letters were now arriving from a debt collection agency. Sophie was confused and concerned as to why and how these bills were coming to the property. Despite several attempts of contacting Scottish Power and the debt collection agency, Sophie was unable to find out why these letters were being sent. This caused her a lot of stress and anxiety. Sophie continued to pay Scottish Gas monthly. Scottish Power's debt collectors attempted to enter the property due to the outstanding debt, even though the debt was not under Sophie's name and they had no right to enter the property. The situation had become extremely worrying and frightening.

Sophie was left feeling helpless and frustrated, in 2021 she came to South Seeds for assistance in dealing with the energy company. One of our energy officers, Poppy, contacted Scottish Power and Scottish Gas about why she was receiving bills from both suppliers. Poppy got the meter serial number from the meter and checked this with Scottish Gas records. Scottish Gas then informed Poppy that they had never provided gas to the property and that they were incorrectly taking payments. Poppy requested a refund for all the payments that had been made since 2018, which was approved and sent via cheque. Sophie got help to set up an account with Scottish Power. Poppy knew about the back billing rule; if you haven't received an accurate bill for over a year, you might not have to pay for all the energy you've used. Poppy requested this for Sophie and she only had to pay for her past 12 months of usage. Despite the long process, which took several appointments to resolve, Sophie was able to leave South Seeds with the situation resolved and peace of mind that her energy account was in order.



Managing energy bills on a limited income



The Gabor family had lived in their Govanhill Housing Association flat with their two children for the last year. They claim disability and carers allowance to help them look after one of their children. The family likes to keep on top of their bills because they are on a limited income. Their gas and electricity supplies are with different providers and they pay bills as soon as they come in. Every quarter they receive their electricity bill which they pay at the local post office.

A meter reader came out to check their electricity meter at the end of the year. This resulted in an accurate bill being sent to them by their electricity provider. It was a real shock for the family that they owed their electricity provider £700. They asked around and some of their friends had received help with energy issues from South Seeds. They knew where South Seeds was on the high street, so they dropped in and were able to book an appointment at a time when they could come back.

Poppy, South Seeds energy officer, had

asked them to bring their bills to the appointment. They explained to Poppy, they were confused because they had been paying regularly and they didn't understand where the high bill had come from. Poppy explained to them about estimated bills and how to take regular meter readings. It hadn't been clear to them that their bills had been estimated. Poppy also explored smart meter options with them but they didn't want one. Poppy asked them about how they used electricity in their home and took time to explain what items in their home may use more electricity than others.

“We had no idea our electricity bill was estimated”

Poppy then applied for funds from 'Home Heating Advice', which is a Scottish Government hardship fund, to help the family pay for their unexpected bill. The application was successful and the funds came through and were added as credit on to their electricity account.



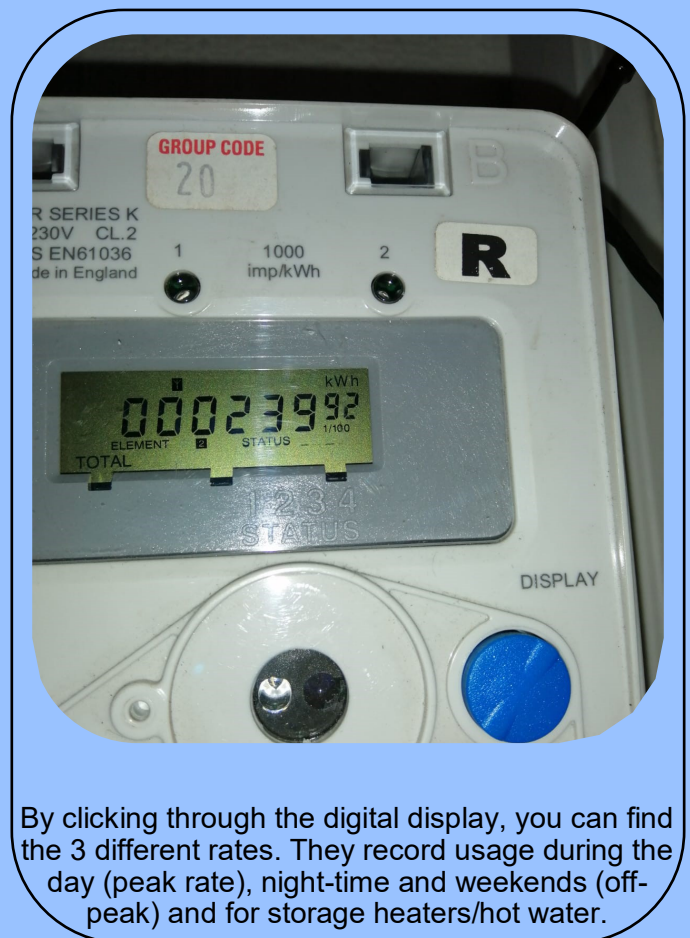
Save energy at home service case study one

Most people trust large organisations to get the basics right. Yet, all too often it is worth double checking. It took a while for a Khatri family to double check their energy bill and they were glad they did.

The Khatri family thought their housing association had made sure the electricity in their home was a reasonable deal. Akaash Khatri, 28, lives with his father Panav in a two bedroom, first floor tenement flat in Glasgow's southside, rented through a local housing association. When they found themselves struggling with their energy bills, Akaash remembered a leaflet they had received through the door and contacted South Seeds for assistance. When Akaash initially got in touch with South Seeds in July of this year, they were running low on credit on their prepayment gas meter and were struggling to top-up. South Seeds energy officer was able to apply for a fuel voucher which would be received in the form of a text message containing a unique code. As Panav suffers from a hearing impairment and a long term heart condition, Akaash is the one who deals with the utilities.

Akaash contacted South Seeds soon after about an electricity bill for their credit meter which they were struggling to afford. In fact, Akaash felt that their electricity consumption had been relatively low, yet they found it hard to keep up with the bills. South Seeds energy officer asked Akaash to contact his provider in order to confirm that they are happy for South Seeds to act on their behalf and have this noted on their records. Once done, we contacted the provider to explain that the client was struggling and the provider was able to put a 3 month hold on the account (which would mean no letters demanding payment), in the meantime, we asked Akaash to provide meter readings.

Akaash gave the energy officer 3 separate readings and further investigation showed that they had a 3-rate electrical meter (commonly used for white-meter, also known as storage heating systems). This was odd because the flat had mains gas, for both heating and cooking. It transpires that although the storage heaters had been taken out in May 2018,



By clicking through the digital display, you can find the 3 different rates. They record usage during the day (peak rate), night-time and weekends (off-peak) and for storage heaters/hot water.

when the property was connected to mains gas, the meter had been left behind.

3-rate meters have high day time rates for electricity because they are usually used for night time usage to power storage heating. We realised we needed to check if the Khatri's have been paying a higher daytime rate ever since.

South seeds contacted the electricity provider and they have begun to investigate, which has involved emailing photos of meter readings weekly for 3 weeks, meter readings at night and in the morning, as well as 'burn' readings where all electrical appliances are switched on simultaneously. They can't have the meter changed to a single-rate until this is resolved. Unfortunately, energy companies can only compensate for up to a year retrospectively, even if a wrong meter has been used.

An engineer has been to the property and conformed that they have the wrong electricity meter. The case is on-going and should be resolved within a few months.



Save energy at home service case study two

For many people dealing with energy providers is hard work. When the energy company's systems fail, it is more than a chore, it is both frustrating and exhausting. Having someone to support you through can make it a lot easier.

A while back when Margaret was relocating from her temporary accommodation back to her privately rented flat after a few years, she sought South Seeds support to close her energy accounts in the temporary accommodation and open new ones in her permanent old-new home. Her flat had been completely renovated, including the installation of a gas boiler and radiators, which had significantly improved the energy efficiency of the home. South Seeds energy officer contacted the energy supplier and closed the accounts at the temporary address and opened new ones (both electricity and gas) at the permanent address. South Seeds energy officer provided meter readings from the move in date and Margaret was supposed to receive details of her new accounts by post.

At both addresses there were credit meters. At her temporary address Margaret paid for her energy weekly with payment cards at the post office.

With out explanation, Margaret received several letters addressed to the owner occupier from the supplier with three different accounts numbers and outstanding balance on the accounts. Margaret didn't understand why there was an outstanding balance on electricity despite her paying £6.50 a week at the post office. The energy officer spoke to the supplier and identified that Margaret's weekly payments were made to her account at the temporary address and it was £308 in credit. A refund was requested and a cheque for the amount was sent to Margaret within 10 working days. The energy officer insisted that Margaret destroyed the old cards, so they didn't cause confusion in the future.

The energy provider at the permanent address confirmed that electricity and gas accounts were registered but for some reason the energy providers administration systems had generated too many letters. South Seeds provided up-to-date meter readings for



Cards are used for prepayment gas meters and keys are used for prepayment electricity meters.

accurate billing. The supplier said that the accounts will be merged and Margaret will receive new post office payment cards.

Sadly, Margaret still had not received her payment cards and continued to receive reminders to pay letters and phone calls from the supplier which were causing her anxiety. South Seeds energy officer raised a complaint. For a few months Margaret didn't receive payment cards, South Seeds continued to contact the supplied via email and phone and each time was told that the new cards would be issued. Finally, Margaret received a gas card, but not one for electricity. South Seeds staff was told that the electricity card will be issued seven days later due to the way that the company's system is set up. Margaret started paying £8 per week for her gas.

In a month, Margaret received an electricity payment card and started paying £7 per week. Plus, up-to-date meter readings were provided. Margaret continued to make her weekly payments. Finally, Margaret received a bill for both electricity and gas with an outstanding balance of £228. South Seeds energy officer requested a goodwill payment, as the supplier made a number of mistakes and failed to send the payments cards in good time causing Margaret to accumulate debt. And as Margaret is financially vulnerable and has multiply health issues, it put her in a very difficult situation. The supplier agreed to make a £70 goodwill payment which left Margaret with outstanding balance of £158 to pay in instalments through her weekly payments over next 12 months. South Seeds energy officer also applied for £140 Warm Home Discount which will help Margaret with costs of the energy during the winter.

South Seeds can help

Many energy providers use call centres to deliver their services. This system relies on information being recorded and communicated correctly and efficiently. When this doesn't happen, residents may

have problems with their energy accounts that are a struggle to resolve. South Seeds' experienced energy team can help clients untangle any issues and support them to get a better service from their energy supplier.

'We couldn't have sorted this ourselves'

Ebenezer and Ebenezer came to South Seeds because they didn't have any gas supply in their housing association flat, despite topping up their prepayment meter. They had recently switched supplier but weren't sure the switch had gone through as they hadn't received information from their new supplier.

South Seeds' energy officer Martin contacted their previous and new energy suppliers and discovered that the new supplier had fitted a smart credit meter for the electricity supply, but had not exchanged the gas meter due to a small debt.

Debt under £500 is not normally a barrier to switching, and it was confirmed that the switch had gone through, so Martin decided to investigate further. He visited the property in Govanhill and found a small debt on the meter

and that the gas supply had been capped by the housing association, as they could not perform a gas safety check.

Martin contacted the new energy supplier, who insisted the debt needed to be cleared before action could be taken and a meter fitted.

However, the clients' gas card, which they had put £100 on, did not work. This meant it was impossible for the clients to clear the debt until the meter was changed, as they were no longer registered with the previous supplier.

Martin helped the pair escalate their complaint to the Citizens Advice Extra Help Unit, which has statutory powers and direct lines to specialist teams at each energy company. Armed with the information collected by Martin and the clients, the unit got the supplier to send out an engineer to exchange the meter.

With that done, Martin supported the pair to get a refund of the £100 credit on the

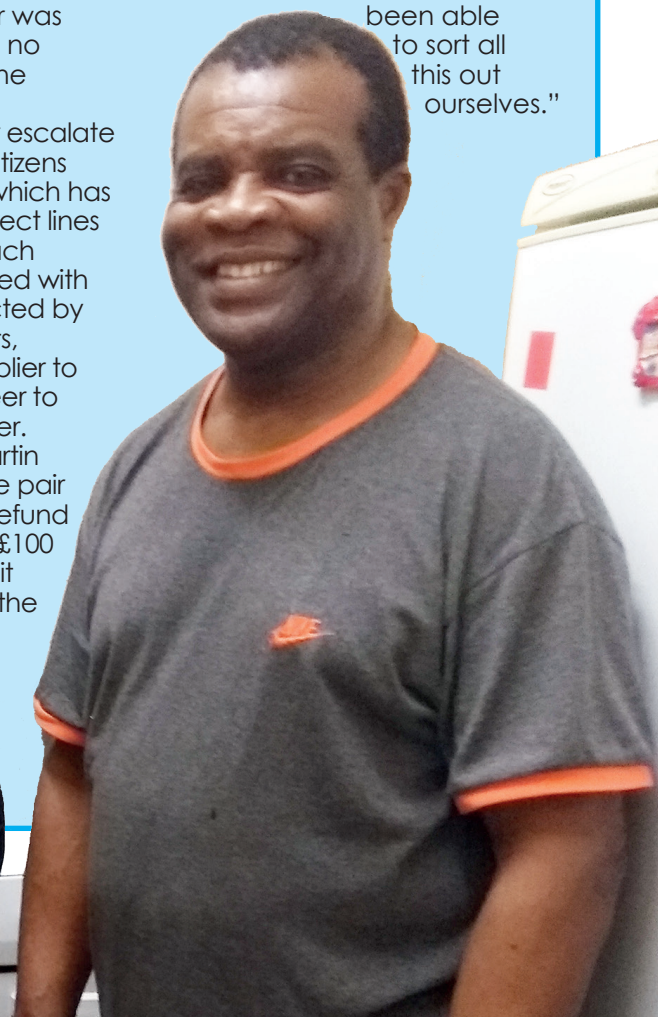
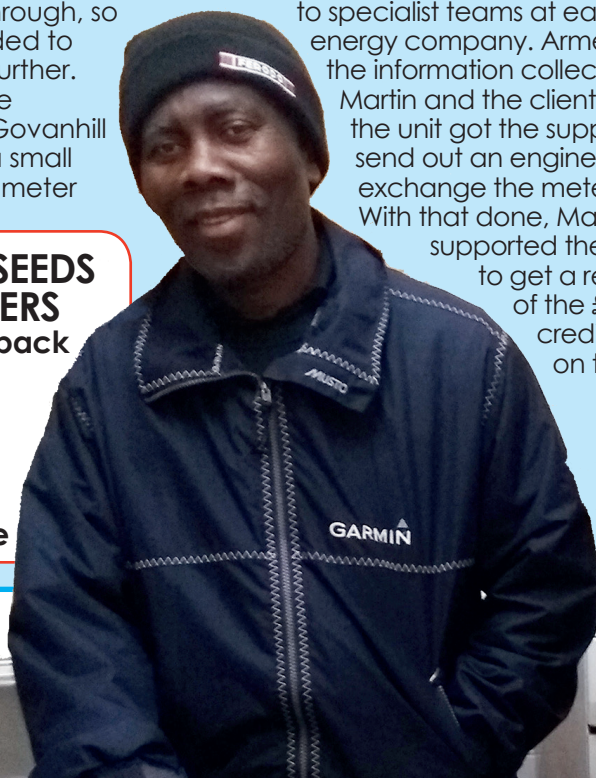
old prepayment card and get the housing association to uncapped the gas supply.

Ebenezer and Ebenezer can now heat their home using radiators supplied by an efficient gas boiler, rather than a small and expensive plug-in electric heater they'd had to use while gas was unavailable.

"We are so happy South Seeds' service exists," said Ebenezer. "We'd never have been able to sort all this out ourselves."

SOUTH SEEDS DELIVERS

- Getting back on supply
- Credit refunded
- Client support and advice





ENERGY

South Seeds can help

Many residents taking on a tenancy in privately rented properties don't get any help from their landlords in understanding how to pay their energy bills. Often, they will just be given a card and a key by their landlord for the gas or electricity meters, and pointed in

the direction of the local shop. Without basic information about how to pay for energy used in the home many people, especially those who have no experience of purchasing energy in this country, struggle to make sense of the payments required.

We support residents to only pay for the energy they use – not others' debt

Money would disappear from Ramona's prepayment gas meter every time she topped up, so she dropped in to South Seeds' office to check why.

Ramona, who is originally from Romania and speaks a little English, lives with her partner and four children in a Govanhill tenement flat on a limited income.

South Seeds' energy officer Martin contacted her supplier and established that she had been paying off a previous tenant's debt because the

account had not been registered in Ramona's name.

Martin arranged for the supplier to clear the £45 debt from the meter, and refund Ramona the £12 she had paid towards someone else's debt. Martin also set up the gas account in her name.

Unfortunately, the process was not straightforward and the code the energy provider supplied for her gas card did not work, so South Seeds had to contact the provider again on her behalf.

Ramona said it was easy to drop back into South Seeds' high-street office to ask for the energy provider to be contacted again.

Later, Ramona came

back in because her landlord had been receiving letters from debt collectors, and Ramona was worried in case she had to pay the money herself.

Martin again contacted her energy supplier and confirmed that the debt was not hers, and that her account was in order.

"I'm so relieved South Seeds sorted this out for me," says Ramona. "I was really worried about that debt."

SOUTH SEEDS DELIVERS

- Contacting energy suppliers
- Help setting up accounts
- Refunds from suppliers
- Support with managing prepayment meters





ENERGY

South Seeds can help

Whether your flat is owner occupied, or privately or socially rented, can have a big impact on how big or small your energy bills will be. Housing associations are registered social landlords and are regulated, so they are required to meet certain levels of energy

efficiency. South Seeds' experienced energy team helps clients in all tenure of properties to understand who is responsible for the energy efficiency of their homes and how they can minimise energy use without necessarily compromising on comfort.

'They made things better straight away'

Sami and his family recently moved into a housing association flat in Govanhill after living in several privately rented flats in very poor condition.

When Sami first walked in to South Seeds' office for support more than a year ago, he and his young family were staying in a privately rented flat with no heating system. To try to stay warm, Sami was using plug-in electric heaters. This meant Sami was paying a lot of money for his electricity consumption, which was causing a significant dent in his finances.

At that stage, Sami didn't qualify for any government-funded improvements but South Seeds' energy officer Jola replaced all the higher-wattage lightbulbs with LEDs and fitted an electricity monitor to allow Sami to keep track of his electricity

usage. As the property had a number of issues that breached the Scottish Government's Repairing Standard South Seeds referred Sami's case to Glasgow City Council Development and Regeneration Services, and to Govanhill Development Trust to help him with an application for social housing.

Over the next few months Sami moved for a short time to two more privately rented flats before securing a tenancy with Govanhill Housing Association. Now Sami and his family have a safe and secure

tenancy which gives them

stability. They live in an energy-efficient flat and their bills are low. Sami and his family feel much more settled in the community and can now focus on building their lives.

Sami says the best thing about South Seeds was that they were able to deal immediately with his family's difficult situation.

"South Seeds' staff were genuinely concerned and acted to help me when our situation was critical," he adds.

SOUTH SEEDS DELIVERS

- Immediate help
- Lower energy bills
- Referrals to other agencies



This is a South Seeds project in collaboration with Govanhill Housing Association and Govanhill Community Development Trust funded by the Aspiring Communities Fund. For more information see www.southseeds.org (charity no. SC042244)



EUROPE & SCOTLAND
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It's a walk in the park for Danny

Danny lives in a housing association flat in Govanhill with his dog Suzi.

Danny suffers from a lung condition and is hooked up to a ventilator at night. He had been struggling to keep his flat warm, and there was a problem with how ScottishPower had set up his account.

On the way to one of their regular walks in Queen's Park, Danny spotted a promotion for the £140 Warm Home Discount on the South Seeds A-board.

While talking to South Seeds' energy officer Casey Dickson to see if he was eligible, Danny mentioned the problems with his account, and the difficulties he'd had in getting them sorted out.

Casey offered to advocate on Danny's behalf to try to resolve his account issues, and to apply for the Warm Home Discount. He gave Danny energy-efficiency advice so he could save money and stay warm. Casey also made sure that Danny is on a priority register so that he can stay connected.

With his account sorted, and the £140 Warm Home Discount credited to his meter, a smiling Danny dropped into South Seeds with Suzi on their way to the park.

"I'm so happy me and Suzi are warm at last, and my energy account problems are sorted," said Danny.

Danny has now booked a free South Seeds energy audit with Casey to see what other steps he can take to cut his bills and keep his and Suzi's home warmer.

