

Beyond academia: researching for impact

A third sector perspective

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Action for Warm Homes

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1. National Energy Action

- Who we are
- What we do



Action for Warm Homes

National Energy Action (NEA)

NEA's Vision: An end to fuel poverty

Our mission: To ensure that everyone in the UK can afford to meet their energy needs in the home, sufficient for good health, comfort and wellbeing

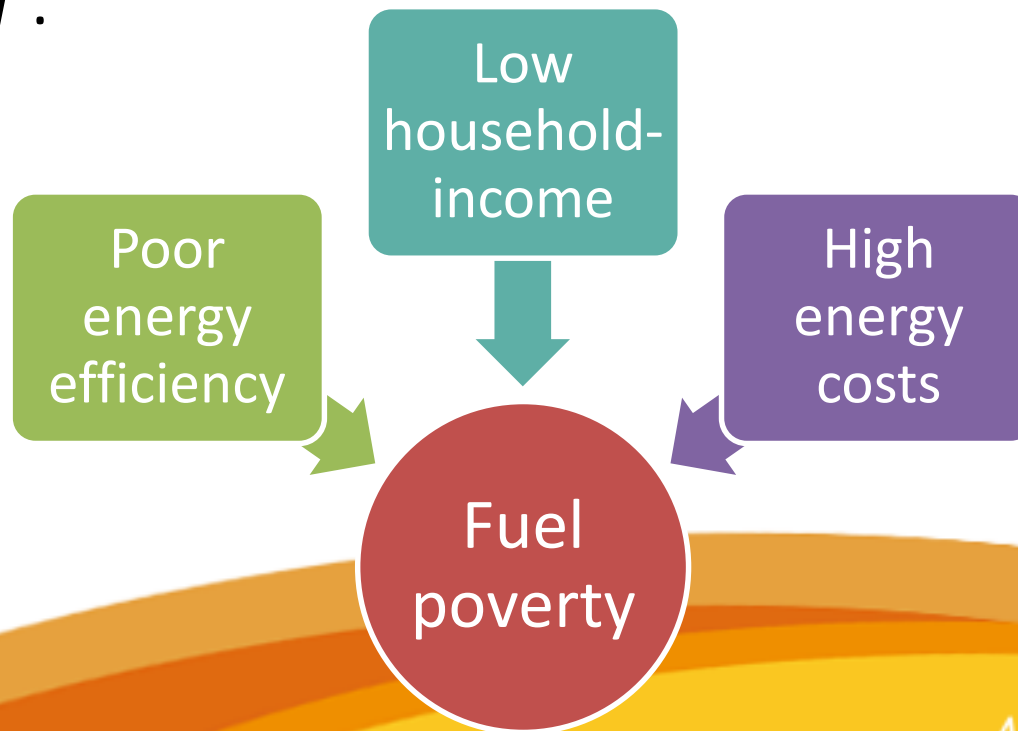
- **Campaigning** to ensure that the needs of fuel-poor households are recognised and addressed
- **Researching and analysing** the causes and extent of fuel poverty and developing policies that will address the problem
- **Developing and managing** delivery projects that show innovative ways of tackling fuel poverty
- **Providing advice and guidance** on good practice in delivering energy efficiency services
- **Training and national qualifications** to improve standards and quality of energy advice



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Fuel poverty?

- Social welfare issue: housing, energy and health.
- More recently become an issue linked to climate change, carbon reduction and social justice.
- *“The inability to afford the energy required to heat and power your home to the standard required for health and wellbeing”.*



2. Working in the 'Third Sector'

- Third sector overview
- Translating and transferring academic skills into roles outside academia
- Working for NEA and my role

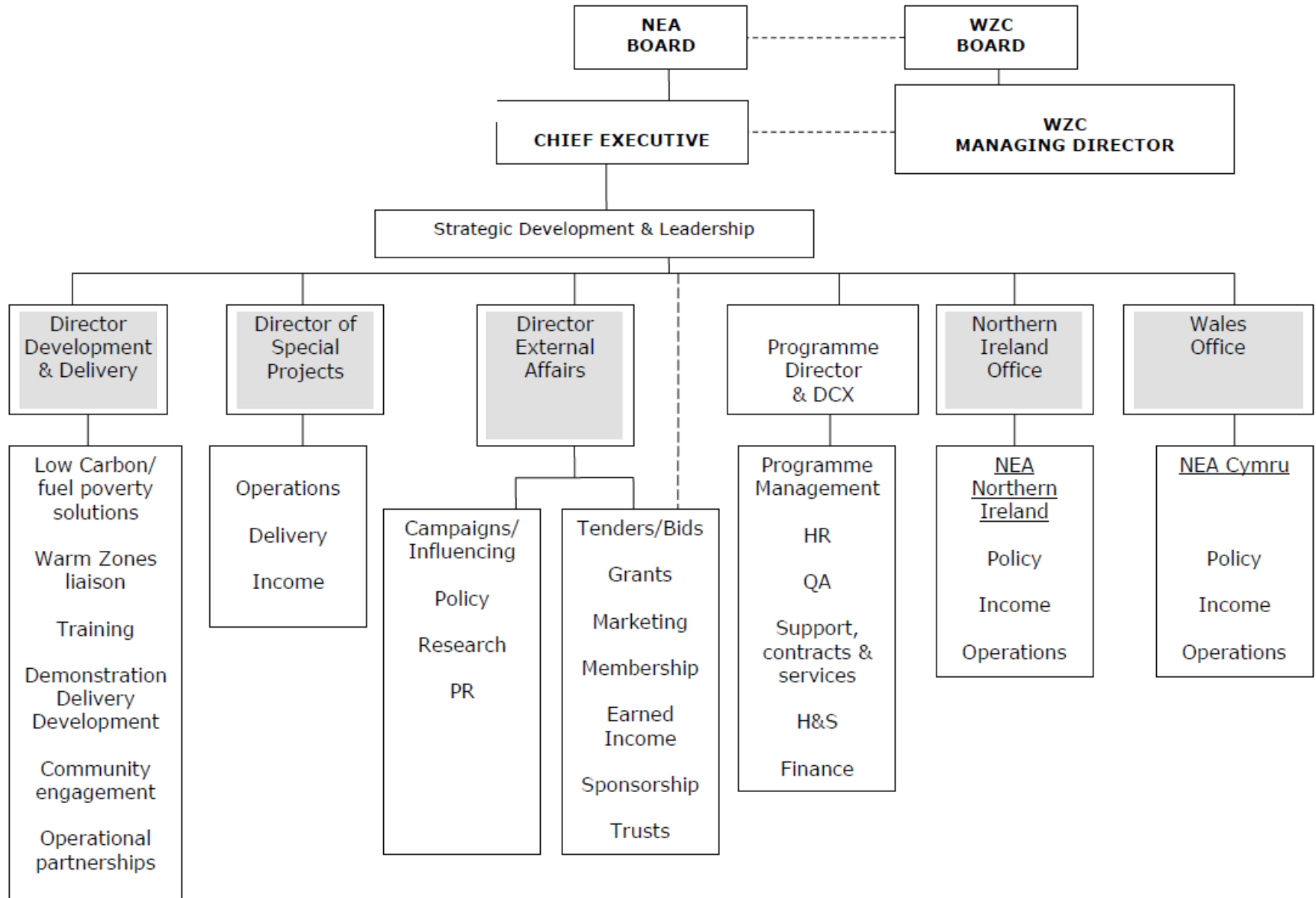


Working in the third sector

- **Varied sector:** NGOs; not-for-profit; community & voluntary sector; social enterprises; charities etc.
- **Charities have some defining characteristics:**
 - Clear set of charitable aims and objectives with structured teams and activities
 - independent of government and business
 - not-for-profit: surpluses reinvested into the charity
 - provide a wider public benefit.
- Working in the Third Sector can be **demanding**, but also **varied, exciting** and highly **motivating**



National Energy Action: Family Tree



How we achieve our charitable aims:



Working in the voluntary sector: *skills & experience*

Hard skills

- Transferable skills: knowledge and capability to perform your role: applied research skills (methods, analysis, reporting); distilling and communicating complex concepts; developing recommendations based on empirical evidence
- IT skills e.g. Microsoft Office applications, analysis packages – SPSS, nvivo

Soft skills

- communication skills, team work, self motivation, initiative, verbal and written abilities, planning and time management, hard work and commitment.

Other skills

- Understanding of the sector and cross-sector relationships
- Interpersonal skills and networking
- Flexibility and willingness to get involved with other activities e.g. a campaign or media event – recognising the links between research and other aspects of the organisation

Experience

- Demonstrate how your previous experience can be translated in your new role: e.g. previous work experience, research, voluntary work, etc.
- Skills and experiences from involvement in student bodies or activities, leadership skills etc.

What my job involves

- Research, policy and practice – a cyclical relationship
- Initiate, design, develop and conduct programmes of research and policy analysis relevant to NEA's objectives.
- Prepare reports and summaries on the outcomes of research programmes for publication and to disseminate the contents to appropriate audiences.
- Identify research topics for the charity and develop new programmes of work.
- Preparation of funding applications and respond to tenders.
- Develop effective working partnerships with individuals and institutions involved in research on fuel poverty and energy efficiency in the UK and beyond.



Evidence-based policy and practice and working with academia

- Transforming research into evidence-based policy and practice
- Impact
- Working with academia: knowledge transfer and knowledge brokering



Transforming research into evidence-based policy and practice

- **Policy and practice should be evidence-based**
- NEA's research is both formative (to improve a programme) and summative (assess outcomes)
- Research is used as a campaigning and lobbying tool, to bring about change or to maintain the status quo
- Policy rarely changes dramatically; it is incremental
- **Co-production:** NEA works collaboratively with decision makers and other key stakeholders, including the academic sector, to optimise problem identification and resolution



Policy impact: some examples

- The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000
- The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy 2001
- **Warm Zones and area-based approach (CESP)**
- Greater equity in the domestic energy market
- Virtual end to disconnection from energy supply
- Warm Home Discount
- Increased ECO funding for fuel poverty
- All-Party Parliamentary Group on Fuel Poverty
- Fuel Poverty Advisory Group
- **Smart meters – code of practice and extra help**
- NICE guidance on reducing Excess Winter Mortality
- On-going Government commitment to eradicate fuel poverty



NEA and academia: knowledge exchange and knowledge brokering

- NEA has worked closely with the sector for several years and recognises academia's role in knowledge creation and as producers of robust research and evidence
- More recently the multi-faceted nature of fuel poverty has broadened interest across many disciplines: geography, engineering, built environment, law, politics, sociology, psychology...
- Role for academia: high quality research and producers of knowledge, new research questions, new approaches to framing the problem – social, environmental... and translating research for policy and practice
- Role for NEA: **co-production, knowledge brokering**
- Examples of co-production: i) advisory; ii) partnership and collaboration; and knowledge exchange



Any Questions?



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