



## **The Energy Services Scheme – PCL Energy Services**

### ***PCL - E – Background***

This award winning scheme was originally designed to help a local authority meet its HECA targets and assist in the achievement of its affordable warmth strategy. The scheme is based upon an idea created from a discussion with a top Queen's Council, officers from Fenland District Council and Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT). *PCL - E* now offers a range of benefits to Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), public and private sector landlords whilst assisting Energy Conservation Authorities to attain their environmental targets. The scheme enables a housing provider to generate funds that can be used to augment other sources of income to target particular groups of households for energy efficiency measures or other environmental improvements. The money can be used for match funding as it is not government (national or local) money.

### ***PCL - E – How it works***

It is not possible to know the energy consumption of new tenants in their new homes this will depend on variables such as what appliances they use, the size of the house, heating systems, how energy efficient they are. It is therefore not possible to tell each tenant which supplier is the cheapest for them when they are moving into a new home. PCL-E offers cheaper energy supplies to the majority with a range of payment options via our supply partner. We have linked this with initiatives such as free low energy light bulbs to help reduce energy consumption. We are working with our RSL partners on a range of initiatives such as encouraging tenants to get into the banking system to enable them to pay bills by direct debit to obtain discounts from all their utility costs and ensure that use their energy efficiently. We are also working on schemes to help remove prepayment meters to member association tenants homes so that tenants are able to have access to the cheapest ways of paying for their energy.

When houses belonging to a registered social landlord (RSL) become void the gas and electricity supplies are transferred to a preferred energy supplier. The supplier has been selected on a best value tender process that was fully transparent with all details provided to the companies that tendered. The tender scoring was weighted to give greater emphasis to social benefits such as a range of options for payment, a range of places to pay, no reliance on prepayment meters (and subsequent high costs) to clear debt, low record of disconnections etc, rather than on the just the price of the energy supplied. When the new tenant moves in gas and electricity supplies are immediately available from a known supplier and responsibility for the supplies is transferred to the new tenant. When a changeover has been made the landlord becomes the customer of the energy company and is able to use gas and electricity supplied to the house at normal contract conditions.

An unusual and probably unique fundamental of the scheme is that it can marketed to owner occupiers and existing tenants. The decision to do this was based upon market research and subsequent analysis by an Energy Saving Trust consultant. In this way lower cost energy supplies (than the historical suppliers) will be available to people without them having to deal with doorstep salesmen, tele-sales or confusing leaflets.

*PCL - E* does however maintain an even handed approach. The scheme is managed by PECT Consultancy Ltd a wholly owned subsidiary of Peterborough Environment City Trust, a registered charity, and provides information on other suppliers throughout the UK as well as Energy Efficiency Advice.

The scheme has been designed to deliver a practical solution to landlords and tenants at gaining access to energy and to information regarding their energy supplies. A range of information leaflets for tenants have been designed and all tenants have access to the PCL Energy Services freephone helpline. Local branding for each scheme is designed for each partner as well as

access to our unique data transfer system ensuring timely and secure transfers of information to enable items such as prepayments cards to be ordered for new tenants.

The scheme aims to provide a better quality service for tenants and enable them to have energy available when they move into their new home and take the stress away from them at a busy time. It also enables Social Landlords to deliver a better quality service for its tenants.

### **PCL - E – The Benefits**

- *PCL - E* creates a fund that can be used to assist local authorities achieve affordable warmth for householders.
- *PCL - E* ensures that incoming tenants do not take on responsibility for debts incurred by the previous tenant (something that happens all too easily).
- *PCL - E* ensures that the incoming tenant has gas and electricity supplies available when they move in.
- *PCL - E* enables tenants to purchase gas and electricity at competitive rates within a best value package without having to trace the existing suppliers or having to make a detailed investigation of energy companies
- *PCL - E* provides the landlord with energy supplies from a known supplier at contract rates to carry out maintenance and testing of electrical, gas and heating systems – the landlord does not have to purchase energy at “deemed contract” prices
- *PCL - E* builds up a database of gas and electricity supply identification numbers for the landlord for future reference which will make changing energy supplies easier
- *PCL - E* provides tenants with access to subsidised energy efficient products from the energy supplier
- *PCL - E* provides a negotiation route for energy supplies for special cases which would be extremely difficult for individual customers e.g. credit supplies for young householders
- *PCL - E* is a scheme which can form one component of a local authority’s affordable warmth strategy for all householders in their area – tenants and owner occupiers
- *PCL - E* provides free independent energy efficiency advice to all householders
- *PCL - E* identifies and enables the solution of supplier discrepancies or other problems before tenants move in – e.g. denial from shipper that the supply exists, vandalised meter installation
- *PCL - E* provides information to all new tenants to help get there fuel supplies arranged before they more in. This benefits the tenant as well as saving RSL staff time dealing with these issues on the tenant’s behalf.

### **PCL - E – Awards**

In 2002 The National Home Improvement Council awarded a Certificate of Merit to the scheme in the category Best Public/Private Partnership in the UK.

In 2005 the scheme was short-listed for a partner of choice award at the National Housing Federation inBiz awards. The scheme was described as *“showing what can achieved when an innovative idea is put into practice to provide an invaluable service to new tenants faced with trying to sign up for gas and electric supplies.”*

### **PCL - E – Organisation**

*PCL - E* is managed by PECT Consultancy Ltd. To co-ordinate the interests of all the organisations participating in the schemes a strategy group, has been set up. This group includes representatives of the managing agent, an advisor and a representative from each participating organisation. Each participating organisation has its own agreement with the Managing Agent, the group discusses best practice and is a chance to talk and exchange ideas with colleagues from other RSL’s leading to joint working on other initiatives.