

# Community Energy Efficiency Toolkit

## Open homes and Demonstration Homes

This guidance is based on the experiences of 6 community projects working under the Big Lottery's Communities Living Sustainably programme.

Demonstration properties and open eco-homes events are two different approaches to enabling people to see energy saving and renewable energy technologies in-situ.

- Open eco-homes enable people to see measures installed in people's homes and to talk directly to host householders about their experiences and decisions. This can address concerns and encourage people to take similar steps themselves. Open homes events raise the visibility of sustainable energy and lifestyles already happening in an area and can be used to raise awareness of your project.
- Demonstration properties are often used by social landlords to show tenants how their homes will be after carrying out improvement works. A demonstration eco-home can be used to showcase more ambitious retrofit measures or multiple measures in one home. A demonstration home would ideally include some interpretation to explain measures and their impacts on householders/energy bills.

### Useful for

Open eco homes	Demonstration homes
A variety of audiences where people may already have an interest in energy saving and renewable energy	Local authorities and social housing providers undertaking refurbishment
'Able to pay' audiences	If your target audience are reluctant to install measures or make behaviour changes
If you want to encourage renewable energy and more expensive energy efficiency measures	If you want to monitor a family/demonstrate longer term impacts and changes
If you have good local examples of domestic installations	
People who may be uncertain or concerned about the implications of installing measures	

### Why does it work?

#### Open homes

- People are curious- they like visiting other people's homes and find it interesting and engaging.
- People who are already considering making changes or installing measures can be inspired to take the next step.
- People concerned about the impact on their homes of adopting measures can see measures in situ and gives them the opportunity to discuss the process with somebody who has done it. Visitors find out what they need to know in a way that's more acceptable than going to suppliers.

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## *Demonstration homes*

Retrofitting a home as a demonstration property can help people accept forthcoming installations of measures by social landlords, for example. If a large retrofit scheme is happening in your area, a demonstration property open to the public gives people the opportunity to visit and discuss the changes. A live-in demonstration home can provide a learning opportunity for families and their neighbours, if their experiences are communicated.

## Benefits of this approach

- This is a good supporting activity to work alongside activities aimed at installing measures
- Enables people to see energy saving measures installed in people's homes and to talk directly to those people about their experiences and decisions, addressing concerns
- Open homes events raise the visibility of sustainable energy and lifestyles in an area, and can raise awareness of your project
- Enables people to build a relationship with other residents, hear about relevant issues, and find out details such as how it works having a baby in the middle of a retrofit project
- It is possible to build up a list of vetted local suppliers of relevant products so there is a local supply of products on display during events.

## Success factors

**Many open homes projects are delivered in partnerships** between local environmental groups such as transition towns, community charities, neighbourhood councils and installers of energy efficiency and renewable energy measures. Inviting installers to attend or hosting a local exhibition of installers enables people to take action on installing measures and ask them questions.

**Be strategic about what you want to achieve, what sort of properties you want to promote and in targeting your audience-** e.g. students learning electrical engineering, architects and planners, for example. Instead of hosting a stand-alone event try incorporating an open homes event into existing local events, especially if they are annual events that are known and well-attended.

**Create a programme of scheduled visits and talks and ask people to book them.** This makes life easier for volunteers/staff running the event and also for householders opening their homes and giving talks. As the public have to register for events you can collect their details, which enables you to contact them to evaluate your event and see if they have taken any action as a result.

## Useful partners

- Suppliers of energy and water saving products and renewable energy technologies
- Householders that have installed energy saving measures and/or practice energy saving behaviour
- Transition groups (source of open homes and publicity)
- Universities (for monitoring and evaluation)
- Local authorities
- Development Trusts
- Architectural heritage organisations or architects