

Community Energy Efficiency Toolkit

Demonstration Homes and Open Homes events

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

Aims

- showcase energy efficiency installations/ improvements
- encouraging energy efficiency retrofit
- encouraging behaviour change
- tackling fuel poverty (demonstration homes)
- encouraging renewable energy installations
- Delivering practical action and behaviour change for households
- To have as many different ways of addressing energy efficiency demonstrated as possible, in a wide range of property types
- enable people to talk face to face with someone who has done it

Target audience

- Vulnerable/ low income (demonstration homes)
- Vulnerable elderly (demonstration homes)
- Able to pay households:
 - People who are likely to be able to install measures
 - homeowners considering refurbishment
- Non-English speakers
- People living in 'hard to treat' homes
- Young people and people needing employment skills
- Builders & building contractors
- Farmers
- Architects and planners

Ways of reaching the target audience(s)

Working partnerships with:

- Architectural Heritage Week
- Local authority and local planning authority (planning officers)
- Installers:
 - Local suppliers encourage short supply chains
 - Suppliers that are not all about a sales pitch
- Neighbourhood Councils
- After school nurseries and young person's projects
- Clubs and associations
- Companies constructing new buildings nearby
- RSLs- enables messages to be delivered by a trusted person rather than a stranger (demonstration homes)
- Transition groups
- Community environmental groups
- Universities
- Non-English speakers - engage champions from those communities, e.g. Somali Women's group, Arabic group
- Homeowners

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Low income

- Through work with a local school
- Market stalls
- Community newsletters
- Word of mouth
- RSLs
- Partner organisations focused on employment and skills

Able to Pay

- Sometimes quite a knowledgeable audience, so they need details – e.g. technical and costs
- Paid advertising in press
- Publicise schedule or place leaflet in local paper
- Posters in shops and public places
- Brochures in libraries
- Leaflets at builder's merchants
- Social media e.g. Facebook
- Advert in County Show guide

Building industry and people needing employment skills

- Developers working on local regeneration projects can be encouraged to participate in a walking tour of open home event to show energy efficiency features
- Young people can be trained in construction and renewable energy installations to fit out a demonstration home

Barriers/challenges

- Difficult to gather data on impact on visitors
- Maintaining interest from the public year on year

Types of home/event

- Demonstration Ecohome with monitored occupants
- retrofitted measures
 - solar panels
 - floors insulated
 - internal wall insulation
 - draught lobby
 - good windows
 - water efficient appliances
- Annual event – Green Open Homes
- Series of free open homes events and talks over a 2 week period
- Thermal imaging comparisons can be shown between ecohomes and neighbouring properties
- Education areas incorporated/interpretation
- Homeowners can be asked to promote behavioural aspects of changes
- Homeowners can also run talks and invite their installer along with a display.
- Talks on topics like achieving air-tightness, renovating old buildings
- Drop-in surgeries with planners and surveyors

Arranging visits& events

- Be strategic about what you want to achieve and what sort of properties you choose to promote

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- Be strategic in targeting your audience- e.g. students learning electrical engineering
- Take bookings to manage capacity, help the householders and enable you to gather feedback
- Sustainable Harborough used grant money from Green Open Homes to fund a supplier presence in a community centre to encourage visits to local properties.
- Proper, scheduled events with a clear start time are easier to manage and the householder only has to do their talk once.
- Provide homeowner hosts with an information pack about what will happen when, who their contact is at your organisation and what they need to do.

Data collected

- Access to meter readings and bill data.
- Gathered details and did a follow-up online questionnaire and phone call.
- Changing the data collection on pledges to enable analysis of particular activities
- Collect evaluation data on the day and after about 3-4 months
- This is not always long enough for people to have taken up more complex/expensive measures.
- Try having a roving reporter on the day to capture people's feedback to use as an engagement tool
- Mail merge registered visitors into an evaluation form so that they can tick off answers

Measures installed/things left with householder

- energy monitors
- Information sheets on properties visited

Follow-up to check impact

- Gather visitor details and did a follow-up online questionnaire and phone call
- Follow up with visitors to evaluate and add them to newsletter list.
- Encourage visitors to return in subsequent years and then install measures and become display homeowners themselves

Examples

Cumbria Action for Sustainability (Sustain Eden) has been running their Green Build festival for several years and has a lot of experience in running open home events, with an average attendance of 500 people per year. They emphasise the importance of good organisation. Georgina Stephenson said:

'We have some drop-in events but you get fewer people and they trickle through. [Green Open Homes] is a proper, scheduled event [within Green Build] with a clear start time, so [it is] easy to manage and the householder only has to do their talk once'.

She recommends these practical steps:

- Schedule times for visits and talks
- Take bookings to manage capacity and help the exhibiting householders. It also makes it easier to gather feedback from visitors and to go back to them for follow-up

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- Mail merge booked visitors into a personalised evaluation form that they can easily tick off answers on
- If possible fund a supplier presence in a community centre to encourage visits to local properties

Sustainable Harborough has combined a demonstration home approach (focused around learning from one home) with an open homes event. They retrofitted one house with energy saving measures and are monitoring the performance of the house and its occupants, a low income family, over time. The family was provided with an 'Ecohome handbook' explaining, how to make the most out of the ecohome- how to use appliances, descriptions of energy efficient features of the house, hints and tips on behaviour change.

'We ran some house familiarisation sessions with the family, helped set up heating for them' (Gavin Fletcher, Sustainable Harborough). Despite some early technological challenges with monitoring, the family has adjusted well to their improved home, making cost savings on energy, and Sustainable Harborough are able to access the energy use data.