

Lessons and Recommendations

Lessons Learnt:

- Where a free service was offered, some participants were not very accurate with the data they provided, or prompt when responding to actions.
- In cases where surveys were done “for free”, the motivation of the participating household may be significantly lower than when there was a charge.
- There are limitations to how much data you can collect in one visit. A trade-off has to be made between time and amount / quality of data.
- Specialist training on particular tools or software may be needed in order to avoid mistakes and inefficient use of resources.
- The predominant motivation to take part in the project was to save money, for example on heating bills. This sometimes meant that environmental awareness was low. In order to address this problem, information about climate change and energy efficiency should be included in project literature.
- Account should be made of the assumptions made by some tools and software, for example regarding lifestyle patterns and behaviour.
- Some householders choose to “realise” their energy savings in the form of increased thermal comfort. It is therefore not possible to assume that a particular energy efficiency measure will result in a reduction in energy consumption.
- It is important to understand the socio-economic status of the participating household, their reason for participating, and attitudes towards the environment. This is particularly useful when explaining any anomalous results.
- It is not possible to gather data on all electrical appliances because sockets may not be accessible.
- A lot of time was required to complete the calculations than was anticipated and this was made more difficult by a lack of cooperation by some households.
- Implementing one small measure can help the householder implement subsequent, more complicated measures, for example, in some cases, the provision of one low energy light bulb helped the householder replace all their lights with low-energy bulbs.

Some Recommendations

Methodology

Ensure that there is sufficient **background information** on the participants that will help suggest reasons for any discrepancies in the results. As a minimum, this should include age and number of occupants, type of house – size and tenure, the type and age of the heating system, the number of lights and appliances and the householder’s occupancy patterns. To help with the latter, ask the participant to fill in a diary of a typical week.

Make sure that the meter readings are taken at the **same time** each week, and that the participants are able to read their meters. Produce a guide giving instructions.

Understanding the **motivations** of the participants may help to explain any anomalous results, and will offer suggestions for information that should be included in literature on energy efficiency schemes.

If possible, collect meter readings and other data for a period of one year before measures are installed and one year after measures in order to **compare two heating seasons** and account for climatic variations.

When using grant schemes or vouchers as financial incentives, make sure that the offer is believable and has credibility.

Low cost energy saving measures, e.g. low energy lights and flow reducers, could be provided to participants to show the impact of small-scale actions on energy consumption.

“Smart meters” or tools that are left in the participants’ home can have an **educational effect** as people realise the extent of their energy consumption.

Communicating Climate Change (and energy efficiency)

Tackling climate change is one of the big challenges we all face. The first step towards encouraging people to take action is to make sure they understand climate change, how it will affect them and the difference they can make. Communicating climate change is crucial if we are to achieve this.

Don’t use jargon and negative language to describe climate change. Research has shown that **people respond better to positive messages** that empower local action. Don’t use complicated scientific explanations.

Make it clear everyone has a role to play in acting together. Help people to understand that they are making a difference.

Make the scale of the solutions sound equal to the scale of the problem.

Create the right incentives for action (not always economic).

Feedback is crucial. If you don’t give feedback, thank people and acknowledge the progress made, then how can people be sure they’re doing the right things? Feedback helps to reinforce behaviour and increases the belief that action makes a difference.

A picture speaks a thousand words – especially for solutions.

If you're trying to change habits, its no good convincing someone just once. You need to **remind** them exactly when they're taking the action you want to change.

Associate climate change with people your audience admires or respects, or with things they care about, like home improvement or local green spaces.

Don't rely on people's concern for their childrens future. Research suggests that people with children are no more likely to be concerned about the effects of climate change on the lives of future generations than people without children.

Awareness raising and dissemination

Utilise a **range of media outlets** – press, TV, radio, websites, leaflets, bus advertising etc. Remember to adjust your language and style accordingly.

Celebrate your successes! Don't be afraid to blow your own trumpet. Give others the opportunity to learn from your experiences (good and bad).

Identify your **key audiences**. Different marketing methods will suit different audiences.

Activities should focus on **changing attitudes** to climate change as well as **promoting pro-environmental behaviour**.

If limited resources are a problem, use other local events / activities to showcase your activities on climate change, rather than organising your own.

Organise an environmental officer to calucate carbon footprints for householders, and then provide advice for reducing their footprint. There are many examples of user-friendly carbon footprint calculators currently available on the internet.

Develop a single, fully interactive **website** for the project, including both public and partner only areas.

Further information is available on the project website: www.econhome.net.