

Project: Home Health HotSpots (Energy Saving Trust Innovation Replication)

Lead Organisation: Community Energy Plus (CEP)

Project Partners: Carrick District Council (CDC)
Creative Environmental Networks (CEN)
Cornwall Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (CEEAC)
EDF Energy

Project Location: Carrick District, Cornwall

Executive summary

The Home Health HotSpots project replicated the innovative approach to the marketing of energy efficiency measures developed by Creative Environmental Networks (CEN) and combined it with the award winning community outreach work strategies pioneered by Community Energy Plus (CEP).

The main aim of the project was to generate referrals and subsequently installations of energy efficiency measures in properties deemed to be most in need of insulating i.e. 'fuel poor' or 'hard to treat'. CEP carried out marketing strategies in these areas designed to stimulate interest in the project and to get residents to sign up to the programme. The marketing schemes concentrated on the neighbourhoods and streets selected by the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software which were considered to have the highest need or potential for energy efficiency measures. The software selected these areas based on the analysis and cross referencing of socio-economic and energy/building related datasets supplied by CEP, Carrick District Council (CDC) and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) – 2001 Census data.

The project delivered Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) funded carbon saving measures¹ to householders with additional funding supplied by the local authority using a mechanism set up through Community Energy Plus's Home Health scheme that has been running successfully in Cornwall for the previous 4 years. The measures available were cavity wall insulation, loft insulation and hot water tank jackets, and all enquirers were checked for Government Warm Front grant eligibility as well. The measures available were offered as they were deemed to be the 'best value' energy efficiency measures available. The project ran from early 2006 until January 2008, during this time CEP managed the day to day administration and marketing of the project as well as overseeing the installation of the insulating measures.

The project helped in terms of 'Strategic Fit': the project contributed towards achievement of and assisted with promotion of the following carbon reduction strategies:

- Kyoto Protocol and UK Aspirational CO₂ targets for 2010
- Fuel Poverty in England: The Government's Plan for Action (DEFRA 2004)
- CSEP Energy Strategy for Cornwall – Strategy Action 7
- HECA Targets and District Council Decent Homes
- EEC scheme policy.

¹ Funding provided by EDF Energy

The Marketing and Public Relations (PR) of the project was carried out in various ways over the 2 year period:

Outreach - Launch events, press and media PR events used to 'warm-up' the area. Public exhibitions in places such as local libraries and information stalls at local community events raised awareness of the project and measures available. The project was promoted with a strong community based approach and branding, using a reassuring, Council supported, minimum fuss and discounted price approach.

Press/Media – CEP's Press and Publicity Officer wrote and issued press releases to the local media (newspapers and radio) the week before mailshots and flyers were due to be sent to householders in the HotSpots areas. This was done to pre-warn the householders that they would be receiving a letter that had details of a genuinely beneficial project and not to treat the scheme as a 'scam' or that there would be a 'catch'. It was recognised that the media reports added validity to the project helping to generate a bond of trust between the householders and the community outreach officers from Community Energy Plus. The press releases focused on the 'human interest' side of the project (economic, health and environmental), including interviews and quotes from householders that had benefited from the Home Health projects. It was emphasised in all of the press releases that the project had the full support of Carrick District Council.

Mailshots - Partners names and logos were used on all promotional material in order to increase the customer confidence of the reliability of the project and the partners involved.

The main outcomes from the project were:

Number of properties with measures installed: 575

Number of measures installed: 770 (Loft Ins. = 473, Cav. Wall Ins. = 253, Tank Jckt = 44)

Carbon Savings annually / lifetime of project: 280.39 tC/yr 9,810.43 tC/lifetime

Future sustainability of the project – At present the Home Health project is continuing to run in the Carrick District and across the county in it's more traditional format where the properties to be installed are selected by the Local Authority. CEP is in discussions with 2 of the other Local Authorities regarding possible future HotSpots projects in those districts.

Recommendations for other organisations/lessons learnt:

- Time may be saved early on in the project by purchasing address matching/recognising software that can attach the GIS UPRN to the correct property HEC record data more accurately than using MS Access.
- Involving other local community groups helps increase the trust given to the project by the householders in the HotSpots areas.
- Radio advertising can be a good way to generate referrals for a project, this may be an expensive option but it might be a useful marketing tool (this would need further investigation).
- Once a community team has 'warmed up' the targeted area and the promotional marketing has been carried out it is essential to send a mailshot as soon as possible to 'strike while the iron is hot'.

This replication project highlighted that the HotSpots methodology used successfully in an urban environment and aimed at able-to-pay householders can be translated to a rural setting identifying 'fuel poor'/hard to reach or those most in need of the insulating measures. The project successfully hit target in terms of the number of properties benefiting from measures after a slow start. By drawing on the experience the CEP Community Team has of working in the county CEP was able to deliver the 550 installed properties as projected.

The key conclusion that can be drawn from the Home Health HotSpots project is that it has only reinforced the fact that when working in rural areas it is essential to have co-ordinated community outreach work in order to deliver the project successfully. The method used by CEN, sending out letters and having advertising posters in the targeted neighbourhoods did not work well in Carrick, the community outreach was essential in generating the numbers of referrals needed in order to make the project a success.

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Website links

<http://www.cep.org.uk/downloads/home-health-hot-spots-case-study.pdf>

<http://www.cep.org.uk/page8g.html>