

Energy Matters

Run by Peterborough Environment City Trust

Funded by the Ebico Trust

Final Report

I. A Brief Re-cap

The project Energy Matters, funded by the Ebico Trust, has reached the end of its six-month duration. The project has helped to tackle fuel poverty in the CAN-do area of Peterborough, achieving many successes along the way.

In the first quarterly report, it was explained how Energy Matters has offered residents essential advice on how to stay warm, save money and reduce carbon emissions where possible. A target of 345 home visits was set for the project, with a total of 351 home visits carried out since August 2015.

II. Resident profile

Residents visited by the project officer were predominantly elderly, single parents, or low-income families. This made the advice given during home visits particularly valuable, as certain residents had limited access to the internet, external support or advice.

The door-to-door promotion continued throughout the length of the project within the CAN-do area, with a mixture of private rentals, Registered Social Landlord residents and home owners visited. Where possible, housing associations and Registered Social Landlord properties were focused on, in order to maximise the value delivered by the project.

Those properties visited belonging to owner occupiers and private renters were predominantly solid brick premises, with the majority of residents with Social Registered Landlords occupying better-insulated properties with cavity walls.

The CAN-do area chosen was of particular significance due to the high levels of fuel poverty identified,¹ reaching up to 12.5 per cent of the city population.

¹ Peterborough Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, <http://www2.peterborough.gov.uk/pdf/HealthAndSocialCare-JSNA-SocialAndEnvironmentalContext.pdf> p24

III. Finances and Costs

- Total grant funded to Peterborough Environment City Trust: **£22,270**
- Project spend from July 2015 until January 2016: **£22,271**

Activity	Expenditure
Project Officer	£11,572
Training (energy awareness and project management)	£700
Supervision	£1,278
Recruitment	£486
Travel	£78
Telephone and equipment	£226
Project materials (energy packs)	£1,895
Marketing and printing (flyers and posters)	£943
Core costs	£5,093
Total	£22,271

IV. Project Promotion

The marketing strategy has continued since the first quarterly report, with the leaflets, online information portal, Facebook page and Twitter account kept up to date with Energy Matters information.

- **Referrals**

A total of 40 Energy Matters referrals were made, each resulting in a booked home visit. Referrals were predominantly arranged following a Cross Keys Homes mailshot scheme, with additional visits booked through referrals from Age UK, local Churches, word of mouth and with the help of Energy Matters posters.

- **Community Events**

During the first quarterly report, *Weeks of Action* was due to be organised – an annual City Council event for Peterborough residents. The week ran successfully, offering advice sessions, street clean-ups and surveys to improve the area as a place to live.

Energy Matters was delivered in the central ward of Peterborough as part of the week-long event, providing information stalls throughout the week at Gladstone Community Park Centre, and promoting the project through a door-to-door campaign. A total of 21 households were visited during the week, each of whom were offered advice on energy tariffs, the Warm Home Discount, energy-saving behaviour, as well as other energy-related matters.



Ms M, who was thrilled to save £291 from her Energy Matters visit, and have her bills explained to her.

“It’s lovely to speak to someone so polite, who can help me on my energy bills”. – Ms M

“Thank you Alice for giving us good advice on switching Energy Suppliers in order to get the best deal. We are very grateful for your help.” - Mr D, after a home visit from a door-to-door promotion of Energy Matters

“It was really nice to meet you. Thank you very much for the helpful info. I must say that it feels very good to be approached by an organisation like PECT which offers help in a very practical way at a time when so many public services are declining.” - An anonymous Peterborough resident after a home visit



Mr W and the project officer at the Age UK Central Friendship Club, speaking about Energy Matters

“Alice’s grasp of the energy market was comprehensive and her understanding and advice were clear and to the point. It was a real pleasure to meet someone with such patience, warmth and genuine care for those of us in our later years. I cannot speak highly enough of the impression I received of her presentation and clarity of the facts of the issue.” – Mr A, a Cross Keys Homes resident, who received a mailshot of Energy Matters and booked onto a home visit

“The visit was very helpful, very informative; nothing pushed at me, but quietly and easily explained. Her visit was a pleasure.” – Ms K, an elderly resident who heard about Energy Matters through her Social Registered Landlord

“This has been enlightening. I really hope that there are projects like this in the future to provide continuing support and advice” – Miss K, a Peterborough resident who, during a home visit, was shown how to use her thermostat and compare energy suppliers

V. Achievements and Outcomes

As a result of the project to date, the following outcomes have been achieved:

- **351** home visits completed in the CAN-do area
- **92** Warm Home Discount applications made
- **3** new energy-saving behaviours on average adopted by residents
- **£110.23** average annual behavioural savings made
- **323kg carbon** saved annually, on average per household through behaviour²
- **£240.91** average saving made by residents who switched tariffs
- **£225 total average household saving**

Due to the Energy Matters project, Peterborough residents have been provided with a free advice service to increase awareness and education on how to use energy efficiently in the household and how to save money. This information equips residents for future savings and allows them in turn to advise their families and friends. Residents have also been provided with assistance on matters which may otherwise be handled by relatives or neighbours, yet were not available to residents. These include sending out Warm Home Discount applications and finalising tariff switches for residents.

VI. Reported Issues

Similar issues experienced by residents reported in the first quarterly report were found to be present during the latter half of the project, including condensation, mould, energy debt and cold drafts. Additionally, inefficient use of economy 7 meters, incorrect personal details on bills, miscommunication and language barriers between energy suppliers and residents, as well as a lack of understanding on programming heating systems were noted on occasion by the project officer.

Advice and assistance surrounding these areas was therefore tailored to the residents’ needs, including organising translation services during the home visit, speaking to energy providers on behalf

² Using Energy Saving Trust, ‘Fuel Prices and Carbon Intensity’
<<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/content/our-calculations>>

of residents where requested, programming heating systems and referring matters to residents' landlords where appropriate. As standard practice in a visit, residents were also offered explanations of their energy bills and how to use a price comparison website,³ equipping them for making tariff savings in the future. This maximised the benefit gained from a home visit by the residents.

VII. Calculation Methodology

Using statistics and formula provided by the Energy Saving Trust,⁴ financial and carbon savings have been calculated based on the outcomes of the home visit. The table below displays the figures used for calculating carbon savings from certain new energy-saving behaviours.

England, Scotland and Wales, Energy Saving Trust

Fuel prices	Gas	Electricity (off-peak economy 7)	Electricity (standard rate)	Oil
Average price (pence/kWh)	4.29	7.22	14.05	5.36
Standing charge (£/year)	£87.92	£80.43	£69.97	-
Carbon dioxide factor (kgCO ₂ /kWh)	0.185	0.490	0.490	0.246

VIII. Case studies

Case Study I

Mrs J was referred to the Energy Matters project officer through Cross Keys Homes, after receiving a letter about the fuel poverty project. She was shortly booked onto a free home visit, which was greatly appreciated due to Mrs M's limited mobility.

Mrs J lives with her partner, both of whom suffer from certain medical conditions. Both residents rely heavily on the help of pension credit, Disability Living Allowance and the Warm Home Discount. The project officer identified during the home visit that the prepayment meters caused particular inconvenience due to the mobility of both residents, as these required the residents to walk to the nearest top-up station. The household, though well insulated and fitted with an efficient boiler, also incurred particularly high energy bills due to the billing method of payment, and the residents' susceptibility to the cold. Therefore, when the project officer performed a tariff comparison, residents were made aware of the potential £532 tariff saving they could make, and the financial benefits of other payment methods and a meter exchange.

³ U-switch, <<http://www.uswitch.com/gas-electricity/>>

⁴ Energy Saving Trust, <<http://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/domestic/>>

Mrs J had also been unaware of certain energy-saving behaviours which would be easy for her and her husband to adopt. This totalled to a £625 annual saving for the household.

Mrs J and her partner are grateful that they can pay for their energy in a way that not only saves them money, but is better-suited to their health needs. Both residents feel reassured that they are able to change their meters in the future, and be provided with support from the project officer during the process.

Case Study 2

Ms E heard about Energy Matters after receiving the Cross Keys Homes mailshot through the post. The project officer arranged a home visit, liaising with Ms E and a family translator, as Ms E's English was limited.

Ms E is a single parent who lives with her children in Peterborough. She is unable to carry out much work due to certain health issues, and was in receipt of benefits for these. The bill-paying method was prepayment cards, which was decided by the resident to be overly expensive for her household income. Due to her circumstances, Ms E was also eligible for the Warm Home Discount, yet was unaware of the scheme.



During the home visit, the project officer took Ms E through a tariff comparison, and a new supplier was selected by the resident. The project officer negotiated with the new and existing energy suppliers on behalf of Ms E. The resident greatly appreciated the project officer speaking on her behalf, as she did not feel confident enough to speak to either party over the phone. The project officer arranged a meter exchange with the new supplier free of charge, calculating a tariff saving of £220. It was demonstrated to the resident how to carry out a tariff comparison online which would also equip her for future savings.

Ms E was advised on the Warm Home Discount during the visit, and an application with her new energy supplier was prepared on her behalf. Personalised behavioural tips were also given during the visit to Ms E and her children. Together, these gave Ms E an additional £251 annual saving, which would accompany her £220 tariff saving.

Ms E feels happy that she has been able to make such financial savings, which will reduce the pressure placed on her as a single parent. She is grateful that the project officer handled all formalities on her behalf, and feels more confident to carry out such tasks independently in the future.

Case Study 3

Miss A heard about Energy Matters through her Social Registered Landlord during an advice session, and was booked onto a home visit to provide assistance with her energy bills.

Miss A had recently moved into the property with her two young children. The resident was undertaking a full-time educational course, and relied upon the financial assistance of government benefits. As her ex-partner had dealt with household bills in the past, Miss A lacked the confidence and knowledge to address these matters alone.

The project officer reassured Miss A and took her through an explanation of how energy suppliers operate, how to read her energy bills, what switching tariffs would entail and how to make a tariff comparison. Miss A had inherited the supplier from previous tenants in the property which was particularly expensive, with the tariff comparison revealing a potential £340 saving.

Miss A had not heard of the Warm Home Discount, and after examination by the project officer, was found to qualify. The tariff comparison was therefore tailored to suppliers who offered the Warm Home Discount, and an application was demonstrated to Miss A.

Because Miss A was new to the property and had not used a thermostat before, the project officer assisted Miss A with reprogramming the thermostat and advised on how to use the timing controls. This is estimated to considerably lower the heating bill compared to the previous usage, whilst offering a more comfortable, steady temperature in the property. Combined with additional behavioural advice which was given to the resident, Miss A is estimated to make annual savings in excess of £400, in addition to the £140 Warm Home Discount and her tariff savings.

Miss A is thrilled to not only take control of her energy bills for the first time, but also to make such financial savings, which will relieve the pressure and allow her to focus more easily on her studies.

Case Study 4

Ms H was referred to the project officer through her Registered Social Landlord, following a previous meeting. Ms H had been experiencing several issues regarding her energy bills, and so the project officer arranged a free home visit.

Ms H, a single-parent of one, had been with her current supplier for some years, and at the beginning of 2015 had updated her direct debit to a new energy plan. Unknown to Ms H, the payment details had not been processed properly, and no direct debit was taken for several months. As a result, Ms H was moved onto a more expensive tariff which required the resident to pay on receipt of the bill.

The resident had contacted her supplier several times via email and telephone, and found it impossible to set up a new direct debit with her supplier. Due to technical difficulties, Ms H also found it equally difficult to pay for the increasing debt incurred.

Ms H had contacted a financial ombudsman and a case had been raised, yet the professional help had provided no solution to the resident. When the project officer visited Ms H, a debt of over £1000 had accrued, and a letter had been received to notify the resident that the energy supply would be cut off within a week. As a result, Ms H was anxious and reluctant to speak directly to her supplier.

The project officer immediately contacted the energy supplier, and spoke on behalf of Miss H, as requested. The project officer explained the issue and identified the original fault occurring as the failure of payment details to be processed, which was by no fault of the resident. The energy supplier negotiated with the project officer, resulting in the deduction of the price difference between the direct debit price and the implemented higher-rate tariff. A Warm Home Discount application was also made over the phone by the project officer, which was then processed by the energy supplier.

With the debt reduced to £473, and the £140 Warm Home Discount added to Ms H's account, the project officer also noticed a dramatic increase of electricity usage within the last year on Ms H's bills. When questioning the resident, it was discovered that Ms H had been given free solar panels which were installed before the billing increase. With a particularly old meter, the project officer deduced that the meter was faulty and the solar panels had been giving inaccurate readings to the energy supplier.

Consequently, the resident qualifies for a £130 minimum repayment and a free meter exchange from her supplier. The identification of the meter error was communicated by the project officer to the resident, which has allowed the resident to follow up the case with her supplier. Ms H is relieved and grateful that the issues with her energy have been resolved swiftly, and that she is now paying only for the energy that she uses, with additional help of the Warm Home Discount.

“Thank you once again for helping me to sort out the issue I have had with my energy supplier. I hope more people get involved because I think it's great what you are doing.” - Ms H