

EBICO TRUST REPORT Q3 (2015)

Summary; DHA's (Direct Help and Advice) project offering free energy efficiency advice to residents in Erewash is progressing well. The award made by the Ebico Trust is enabling a higher number of residents than forecast to access help and advice relating to their household energy issues. In the initial application, which was accepted by the Trust, DHA said the project would reach 100 – 150 residents on completion after year one. As of the end of quarter 3, the project has reached 213 households totalling 458 residents, well overachieving on target. Partnerships are strengthening which allows the project to flourish and meet the increasing demand.

Current Q3 Service Delivery;

10 home visits' assisting 14 residents.

Home visits continue to be integral to the success of the project. Commonly these are requests for tariff checks and how to use central heating systems. However, this quarter the Energy Efficiency Coordinator has made a cavity wall insulation referral and dealt with 3 billing issues. Referrals for home visits from partner organisations are well established with referrals being received from, but not exclusive to:

- Erewash Citizen's Advice Bureau
- Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Brigade
- Derbyshire Community Bank (formally Erewash Credit Union)
- Derbyshire Social Services
- Derbyshire Public Health
- Community Concern Erewash

The project is also beginning to see residents dropping into DHA's centre (primary focus is as a training centre) in Ilkeston requesting Energy Efficiency help and advice.

The partnership with Erewash Citizen's Advice Bureau continues to deliver Health, Wealth and Wellbeing events through their community advice and information bus which tours the area with a raft of advice services. Cotmanhay was the location of the event in this quarter.

*The most deprived Lower Super Output Area within Derbyshire is Hopewell North, which lies within the Ilkeston North ward and covers part of the Cotmanhay area. It ranks within the top 1% most deprived areas in England.

The event saw 10 households (15 residents) 'drop in' for advice.

- 7 households made Warm Home Discount applications
- 2 households were advised to come off Economy 7
- 5 households advised to contact their energy supplier re the removal of pre payment meters as there was no fuel debt. They all wanted to access cheaper tariffs and understood the concept of regular payments.

*Derbyshire County Council's report on the English Indices of Deprivation 2015

Links with Community Concern Erewash resulted in a presentation to the latest intake on their Hopeful Project:

- 11 households (17 residents)

The Energy Efficiency Coordinator presented information on general household energy efficiency and tariff switching. 1 resident requested a home visit. He had recently been registered disabled and moved into a housing association bungalow which had pre payment meters. We arranged for the resident to be added to his power suppliers Priority Services Register and to have the pre payment meters swapped to credit meters as they were hard to top up due to the residents now reduced mobility and there was no outstanding debt. The resident will contact the project when the meters have been exchanged to carry out a tariff check.

A presentation was given to Erewash Community Friendship Group

- 23 households (33 residents)

Leading to 2 home visits to make Warm Home Discount applications and consolidate their fuel bills on to the cheapest tariff with their existing supplier, neither wanted to change suppliers.

Links forged with the Public Health Development Worker for Erewash gave the project the opportunity to hold drop in advice sessions at local library's who have a Health and Wellbeing zone.

- Sandiacre Library – 7 households (21 residents)
- Borrowash Library – 6 households (12 residents)
- Long Eaton Library – 9 households (12 residents)
- Ilkeston Library – 5 households (5 residents)

The main source of interest was the Warm Home Discount, which none of the residents spoken to were aware of.

Case study

Mrs M dropped into the Ilkeston office having been billed for over 2 years worth of electricity. The bill came to over £2000, she has storage radiators as her only heating source. She moved into the property in the summer of 2013 after separating from her husband. She had evidence of her moving in date and correspondence from her energy supplier acknowledging she had supplied a moving in meter reading and that she had moved from her previous address and her husband was now solely responsible for the fuel use at that address. She then received bills relating to her previous address whilst receiving none for her current address. Over the intervening period Mrs M contacted her energy supplier on numerous occasions asking for a bill for her current address and providing the energy supplier with meter readings. No bills ever arrived until November 2015, when she was back billed to the sum of over £2000. She was extremely agitated when she contacted the Energy Efficiency Coordinator. Mrs M knew she had to and was willing to pay for her fuel but was very worried about the amount, especially as she had been asking for a bill for over 2 years. The Energy Efficiency Coordinator took over communication with the energy supplier and invoked the Back-billing Principles which state that if the supplier is at fault they will not seek additional payment for unbilled energy accrued more than one year prior to the bill being issued. With the intervention of the Energy Efficiency Coordinator the supplier admitted fault and reassessed Mrs M's account for the past 12 months only and issued a bill for £898. It was agreed for a pre payment meter to be installed with repayments for the debt being set at £15 per week. When the debt is cleared a credit meter will be installed and a payment plan set up. Mrs M was highly delighted with the outcome.

Case Study

Miss T was a referral from the partnership with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue. Living alone and recently struck with mobility issues, which health professionals are struggling to diagnose, she had never looked at changing supplier or tariff. Payment was made on receipt of her bill, when she relied on a friend to take it to the post office to pay. Her gas consumption has inevitably increased due to her lack of mobility. The first issue was to explain how she would have access to the best deals if she moved to direct debit, which would also remove the reliance on her friend being able to go and pay her bill. Although Miss T used direct debit for her council tax she found the concept of paying her energy bills by direct debit a little difficult to grasp. Careful and patient explaining of how the process worked gained Miss T's confidence. It was agreed that tariff checks would be done for her existing method of payment and payment by direct debit, so that the 2 could be compared. The results showed Miss T that by moving to one supplier she could save £367 per year but if she moved to one supplier and paid by direct debit she could save £481 per year. Due to the significant savings available Miss T agreed to change to direct debit. Swapping suppliers had no effect on any Warm Home Discount application as Miss T does not qualify. Miss T was very grateful for the time spent with her.

CONCLUSION

DHA would like to thank Ebico Trust for supporting DHA's successful energy efficiency project enabling us to exceed targets and highlight the need for this work in an area that is categorised as being in deprivation. The project is of particular benefit to those unable to get into advice centres.

