

## **Service delivery case study: Woking Borough Council**

### **Overview of service delivery**

As part of the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) of 1995 Woking has been working to implement energy efficiency projects in the borough. The projects have been varied and wide reaching, for example from the Thameswey Condensing Boiler Scheme open to all residents to working more specifically with black and minority ethnic communities.

### **Objectives**

The rationale for the council's energy efficiency schemes has been two fold – firstly, to help eradicate fuel poverty in the borough and secondly to reduce energy use, therefore contributing carbon savings under the climate change strategy.

### **Methodology**

- free energy efficiency advice is provided to residents through the Surrey and East Sussex Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (SESEEAC). SESEEAC is one of 52 energy advice centres across the UK and provides free, impartial and locally relevant advice to householders in the borough. This includes advice on energy efficient measures and available grants
- the council worked in conjunction with British Gas and the Energy Conservation and Solar Centre, to implement the Thameswey Condensing Boiler Scheme. The scheme offered energy efficiency boilers at a discounted price and was so effective that it was extended to a further 11 authorities. Between 2001 and 2005, over 5,000 residents across these authorities benefited from the scheme
- Winter Warmer is an energy efficiency scheme run by the council for the over 60s. Since 2000/01, when the scheme was launched, over 700 households have benefited from free insulation
- the Council recognises that a proportion of the population remains out of reach of energy efficiency advice because they do not approach agencies that can give them advice. The council has a contract with the Energy Conservation and Solar Centre to utilise the EnergyCare Network (TECN) for the provision of energy efficiency training for people working in the community who are known and trusted by the clients, such as home carers, Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) Welfare Rights Workers and health workers and local people who could become energy champions. Training covers how to identify a householder experiencing the effects of fuel poverty, the use of the TECN referral process and how to give effective advice. The training sessions highlighted the links to improved health from the improvement of domestic energy efficiency. Three workshops called 'Engaging ethnic minorities and the hard to reach' were held at the quarterly TECN event in Eastbourne. The council is continuing to build on the 20 frontline professionals and voluntary sector workers who have already undergone training in Woking.
- the council set up a pilot project to increase the uptake of the energy efficiency services within the black and minority ethnic communities in Woking. Following feedback collected after a TECN event, and a meeting with the secretary of the local mosque, it was found that the best way to engage the local ethnic community was by

'word of mouth' rather than inviting large groups to a formal presentation. It was decided that an energy efficient 'show house' would enable members of the local community to see and hear for themselves the types of measures and assistance that was available to improve their homes. A local family agreed their home could be the show house, and was suitably adapted to demonstrate what was available

## Outcomes

- out of the 3,500 private sector households in Woking, over 12,000 have taken advantage of the council's energy conservation schemes. Of this, over 3,700 households have been provided with energy conservation grants to provide full insulation measures. This has helped the council achieve a 30 per cent improvement in energy efficiency in the borough's housing stock since 1996. This attains the Home Energy Conservation Act's target for April 2006
- Woking has sought to tackle fuel poverty by reducing the heating costs for the council accommodation to a percentage of the state pension. Today, 98 per cent of council dwelling can be heated to a comfortable temperature for 10 per cent of income or less (for sheltered housing) or £10 a week or less (for non-sheltered housing)
- the council has helped 3,700 private sector households with energy conservation grants since 1996/97

## Positive learning points

- work in partnership with other organisation to implement energy efficiency project
- take advantage of your local energy efficiency advice centre (and local energy support team if you have one) to help implement energy efficiency projects
- think of innovative ways to reach all communities – the most hard to reach are often also the most in need

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