



# Energy efficiency and minority communities

This case study provides an overview of an initiative in Nottingham that promoted energy efficiency to ethnic minority and non-English speaking communities. Recognising that minority communities often live in the least efficient housing and face barriers in obtaining information and advice about energy efficiency, the project provided targeted energy advice, education and training, grant referrals and energy efficiency measures.

#### When did the project begin?

The project commenced in April 1998 and was completed in March 2001.

#### Who was involved?

The project was led by the Nottingham branch of National Energy Action (NEA), a national charity which campaigns for affordable warmth and improved energy efficiency in the homes of vulnerable people. The project also involved a wide range of community and voluntary organisations across the city, departments of Nottingham City Council and local schools.

#### How was it funded?

NEA Nottingham was part-funded by the Government's Environmental Action Fund (EAF), with matching funding from Powergen and the Boots Charitable Trust.

#### What were the targets and aims?

The project aimed to promote the efficient use of energy in the home and raise energy awareness within ethnic minority groups in Nottingham, and so ensure that minority communities played a full part in the energy aspects of Nottingham's Local Agenda 21 Strategy and in the implementation of Nottingham's Home Energy Conservation Act Strategy.

The main objectives were:

- to enable fuel-poor households to save energy in their homes by using it more efficiently
- to promote energy awareness through the provision of training for community leaders and others whose work brings them into contact with the fuel poor
- to encourage the take-up of grant assistance for energy efficiency improvements, in particular for the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (Warm Front).

Both quantitative and qualitative targets were agreed with the project funders.

#### How was it implemented?

The programme of work included energy advice cases, referrals to grant schemes, energy audits, educational initiatives, presentations and displays, energy efficiency training and energy efficiency promotional material.

The highlights of the three-year programme were as follows:

- hour-long presentations were given to community groups such as luncheon clubs, mother and baby groups, self-help groups and youth clubs. Contact was established through social services, posters and by word of mouth. Each person attending was given two low-energy light bulbs and information on ways to save energy in the home, and how to operate basic heating controls, install insulation and obtain grants. During the three-year project, contact was established and presentations were made to 40 groups
- the project distributed 3000 low-energy light bulbs donated by Powergen as part of their Care and Concern campaign
- the project organised an inter-schools energy quiz in partnership with Nottingham City Council's Energy Management Team. The event took place at the Town Hall during Warm Homes Week (NEA's national awareness-raising campaign) and seven schools took part
- all Nottingham City schools received a free energy audit and assistance with formulating an energy policy for use in the school and at home
- an energy advice booklet (with a thermometer attached) and poster, aimed at minority communities, was launched and distributed to community groups in the city. The booklet was available in nine languages.

“A lot of elders in our community don't speak English and didn't know anything about saving energy. NEA came and talked to them with an interpreter. They were very happy with the light bulbs, and many of them qualified for a grant for their houses. Thank you.

Mr A. Singh, Indian Community Centre, Nottingham

## LESSONS LEARNT

- 1 relying on informal interpreters (family or friends) during home visits was not ideal: a lack of understanding of energy efficiency and technical terms made interpreting difficult and also meant the quality and accuracy of interpretation couldn't be guaranteed.
- 2 extensive consultation with the communities served by the project is essential to ascertain what they need
- 3 researching the local community is vital: which minority communities are present? Is the project approach sensitive to cultural issues within the community?
- 4 long-term monitoring must be built in to ascertain what really works
- 5 a project advisory group with representatives from local communities must be established.
- 6 major initiatives such as Warm Front should make their literature available in all appropriate languages and in a variety of formats
- 7 frontline staff should have access to trained interpreters
- 8 promotional material should be culturally appropriate and sensitive
- 9 the design of energy efficiency schemes should be sufficiently flexible to take account of the living patterns of different cultures, which affect the use of rooms within the home.



## Achievements

The project exceeded all its quantified targets.

- 1455 energy advice cases were delivered (target 800)
- 1018 referrals to grant schemes were made (target 600)
- 248 people received basic energy awareness training.

## Three key success factors

- 1) delivering presentations to community groups – especially when undertaken informally, e.g. at social gatherings, lunch clubs – was very effective at getting the energy efficiency message across
- 2) producing the locally-specific information brochure in all appropriate languages (English, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Hindi, Bengali, Vietnamese, Polish and Ukrainian) worked very well and was very popular
- 3) being able to offer incentives (free light bulbs) helped the promotional strategy for the training and presentations.

## Next steps

NEA is continuing its work in Nottingham, focussing on creating 'energy champions' within communities. Minority community advisers continue to provide energy saving help, and additional funding has enabled local versions of the multi-language booklets and posters to be produced for other cities.

## New developments

NEA have recently produced a new energy efficiency resource in the form of an interactive DVD providing energy advice in 15 different languages. The languages have been chosen in an attempt to reach as many members of minority communities in the UK as possible. For further details of the project please see [www.nea.org.uk/publications/films\\_&\\_video\\_material](http://www.nea.org.uk/publications/films_&_video_material)

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**Community Action for Energy** (CAfE) is an initiative of the Energy Saving Trust that promotes and facilitates local community based energy projects. This case study is one of a series showcasing the most exciting and innovative of the 2500 projects that are part of the CAfE network.

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