

Local Councils and the Green Deal

Research Summary

Parish, Town and Community Councils have close links to the people within their communities. They are therefore well placed to play an active role in encouraging energy efficiency investment. Possible roles for these councils include setting an example, providing information, co-ordinating action to help vulnerable people and partnering with delivery agencies.

This project aimed to investigate how Local Councils (Parish, Town and Community Councils) could act to improve the equity of implementation of home energy efficiency policies in the UK, focusing in particular on the Green Deal (including Green Deal finance and the Energy Company Obligation).

It was carried out by Joanne Wade in partnership with Emma Jones of CAG Consulting, and was supported by the National Association for Local Councils and the Association of Scottish Community Councils.

Method

The study began with a workshop involving a group of expert stakeholders on local sustainable energy and fuel poverty, to discuss the potential equity issues linked to Green Deal implementation. This informed the design of two workshops with Local Council representatives, one in England and one in Scotland, to elicit views on the roles that they could potentially play. The workshops were complemented by an online survey of Local Councils to gather their views on their role in tackling fuel poverty.

The results of this initial stage of the work were summarised in a policy report, *'Can Parish, Town and Community Councils increase the equity of Green Deal implementation?'*

The second stage of the project was the development of a toolkit of resources to support local councils in delivering the roles that they had identified. The draft toolkit was piloted in four further workshops, in Aberdeenshire, Dorset, East Sussex and South Wales. Feedback from these workshops informed the final printed and navigable online versions of the toolkit.

Equity and Green Deal implementation

Concerns about the equity of Green Deal implementation centre on two types of people: those who may not be seen as 'attractive' potential customers by Green Deal providers, and those who might not be interested in Green Deal offers or unwilling to take them up.

Area-based approaches, offering a combination of Green Deal finance and ECO support, may be the only way to ensure that everyone in need is made aware of the help available to them. However, there is no

guarantee that the Green Deal will be rolled out across all areas of the country, as providers will naturally target areas that should provide them with the best business opportunities. Areas of extreme rurality and those with high concentrations of 'hard to treat' properties are of particular concern, although the focus of ECO on solid walled properties may in part mitigate this.

The Green Deal involves a complex finance mechanism that will be hard to communicate and people are likely to be wary of something that they do not fully understand. This reluctance to engage may be highest amongst traditionally hard to reach groups but it is likely to reduce take up amongst a far broader group of people.

Local Councils

There are over 10,000 Local Councils in England, Scotland and Wales. They are the most local tier of elected representation and are expected to be the voice of their community, and to be consulted on local matters by the Principal Authority in their area. In England and Wales, Local Councils are also responsible for a range of local services and the maintenance of community facilities.

Some Local Councils are already taking action on energy efficiency, such as improving their own buildings, communicating sustainable energy messages to the local population and developing fuel buyer groups to reduce costs in off-gas areas. Seventy per cent of respondents to our survey agreed that Local Councils have a role to play in tackling the problem of fuel poverty.

Potential roles for Local Councils, linked to Green Deal delivery, range from increasing general awareness of energy efficiency by acting as an exemplar, through building trust and credibility for Green Deal in particular, to

active participation in identifying vulnerable people and potentially even to local Green Deal delivery through partnerships with other delivery agents or the establishment of local social enterprises. Local Councils face time and money constraints and those we talked to also expressed reservations about their own level of confidence in the Green Deal. Hence, for many, the most appropriate initial roles may be increasing energy efficiency awareness and working to identify vulnerable households.

The toolkit

There is a need for much more work to engage Local Councils in energy efficiency action: the toolkit is designed to be used by people carrying out this work, as well as by Local Councils and other community based groups to support their work on energy efficiency. The focus of the toolkit is on local investment in home energy efficiency, with the Green Deal presented as one method of financial support for such investment. The main roles explained are: setting an example; providing information to people; co-ordinating action to help vulnerable householders, and developing partnerships with delivery agencies.

The toolkit explains each role, points to major resources that can be used to support action, and presents sources of further information and support. It includes presentation slides for local organisations to use in energy efficiency or Green Deal events, details of the Green Deal and ECO, and information to help those thinking about setting up a local social enterprise.

For more information

The toolkit can be found at: www.communityaffordablewarmth.com. The policy report can be downloaded from the eaga Charitable Trust website: www.eagecharitabletrust.org

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