

Hard to Reach and Hard to Help: bringing energy efficiency to elusive audiences

Lotte Ramsay

Association for the Conservation of Energy
Westgate House
2a Prebend Street
London, N1 8PT, UK
lotte@ukace.org

Jacky Pett

Association for the Conservation of Energy
jacky@ukace.org

Keywords

energy efficiency programmes, fuel poverty, partnership, social equity

Abstract

Programmes and policies to promote domestic energy efficiency on a generic, national level invariably neglect a proportion of the population that do not receive, or cannot act on the information that they provide. Furthermore, tackling these 'hard to reach' and 'hard to help' audiences is not usually considered cost-effective, as they require unconventional marketing methods and non-standard energy efficiency measures.

However, for reasons of social equity and environmental protection these audiences must be addressed. They include the most vulnerable in society and represent a significant proportion of the domestic sector. If CO₂ emissions reduction targets are to be reached then new and innovative programmes must be developed to deal with them.

In Britain¹, established national programmes offering standard measures to a defined audience are realising that emissions reduction targets will not be met using these methods alone. Based on examples from two recently completed research and evaluation projects, as well as feedback from ongoing local initiatives this paper outlines the scope of the problem in Britain and discusses why and how attention can be turned on these elusive audiences to bring about further energy saving in the domestic sector.

Case studies are used to illustrate how new approaches to marketing energy efficiency; such as utilising other groups (e.g. health professionals) to promote the message, can help to access the 'hard to reach'. Analysis of unconventional energy efficiency measures and sustainable energy solutions in specific circumstances shows how they can be cost effective in assisting the 'hard to help' audiences.

Introduction

In 1990, at the beginning of the Kyoto period, carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the UK domestic sector stood at 42.6 MtC; 27% of total emissions (DETR, 2000). In response to growing concerns over climate change and fuel poverty² emissions from this sector are now being addressed by a number of binding targets and aspirational goals introduced through international agreements and national legislation. These targets are outlined in Table 1.

Under the UK Climate Change Programme a suite of domestic sector energy efficiency programmes and policies were developed; all are designed to work towards achieving the Kyoto target of 12.5% reduction in greenhouse gasses and the additional "aspirational" target of 20% reduction in CO₂. Total carbon savings from the measures targeted at this sector are projected at 5.2 to 6.5 MtC; equal to around 27% of the total savings projected by the entire UK Climate Change Programme³. Table 2 shows all the measures directed at emissions reductions in the domestic sector, for clarity, the

1. England, Scotland & Wales.

2. The standard definition of a fuel poor household is one which needs to spend more than 10% of its income to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth (21°C in the living room and 18°C in other occupied rooms).

3. All measures aimed at fuel poverty and other domestic targets overlap with measures specifically aimed at the Kyoto target. Therefore the suite of measures cited in the Climate Change Programme also covers those measures being used to achieve the other domestic targets in Table 1.

Table 1: UK targets and goals for emissions reductions affecting the domestic sector.

Description	Target	Notes
Kyoto Target	12.5% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2008-2012	Policies and programmes to address Kyoto were developed for the UK Climate Change Programme
UK aspirational goal on emissions reductions	20% reduction in CO ₂ emissions by 2010	UK aspirational goal to achieve emissions reductions over and above Kyoto target
Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA)	30% improvement in domestic energy efficiency by 2010	Target placed on all UK Local Authorities
Energy Efficiency Commitment	62TWh saving to be made by 2005	Target placed on all suppliers with a domestic customer base of >15,000. 50% of savings must come from schemes targeted at customers receiving income-related benefits or tax credits
Warm Homes Act	Eradication of all fuel poverty by 2010	Commitment by UK Government to bring all homes out of fuel poverty i.e. through improving energy efficiency

Table 2: Summary of UK policies and programmes targeting CO₂ emissions reduction in the domestic sector.

Category	Measure	Description
Advice and Information	Government marketing and awareness raising campaigns	Marketing campaigns such as: "Energy Efficiency" and "Are You Doing Your Bit?". Promoting cost effective behavioural changes and purchasing decisions that improve household energy efficiency.
	Appliance labelling and standards	Compulsory energy labelling of household electrical appliances. Associated with minimum standards in energy efficiency.
	Energy efficiency advice and information services	A network of Energy Efficiency Advice centres across Britain, promoting energy efficiency to householder and small businesses. Offering practical advice and information on how to become more energy efficient
Incentives	WarmFront	Government funded programme providing energy efficiency measures to vulnerable households on income related benefits. Particularly targeted at alleviating fuel poverty, but also aiming to improve domestic energy efficiency.
	Reduced VAT on energy saving materials	All energy saving materials that are installed by an outside contractor are taxed at a reduced rate of 5% VAT.
Regulation	Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC)	Following the success of the Energy Efficiency Standards of Performance (EESoP), EEC is a three-year programme that requires energy suppliers to meet an overall target of 62 TWh by improving energy efficiency within households.
	Market Transformation Programme (MTP)	The MTP works with business and the Energy Saving Trust to identify the scope and practical actions needed to ensure more efficient products and services are delivered in the area of domestic appliances.
	Reform of Building Regulations	More stringent regulation on energy use and efficiency in new buildings. (N.B. This includes the business sector)
Working with others	Local Authorities	Greater partnership working, using responsibilities such as the Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) to encourage local authorities and housing associations to take an active role in energy efficiency at a local level.
	Housing Associations	
	Government sponsored partnerships	

(Source: DETR, 2000)

measures shown are classified into four categories: Advice and information, incentives, regulation and working with others.

Overall these measures are directed at a broad range of householders across the income spectrum, designed to maximise the uptake of energy efficiency technologies across the sector and promote energy efficient behaviour to a wide audience.

For example: WarmFront provides energy efficiency measures to those on income related benefits that would otherwise have been unable to fund measures themselves. Efforts such as the "Energy Efficiency" and "Are You Doing Your Bit?" campaigns target the better off and more active consumers, encouraging them to take easy, cost effective steps towards reducing their energy consumption. These campaigns are further supported by the appliance standards

and labelling initiative that ensures minimum standards of efficiency on many household electrical items.

However, there is evidence that this broad portfolio of programmes is not meeting its full potential, especially in addressing some of the most vulnerable and energy inefficient members of the domestic sector. Figure 1 illustrates this pictorially; there are some elusive audiences that are not being reached by government incentive and information programmes, as well as groups that cannot take the generic cost effective steps to reduce energy consumption in their homes. These audiences are defined here as the "hard to reach" (those that are not currently identified by government programmes) and the "hard to help" (those that cannot use the help that is available). Currently, the UK's national programmes are addressing the "easy to reach" and

“easy to help”; leaving out a small but significant proportion of the population.

Using a selection of recent research projects, programme evaluations and scoping studies this paper aims to:

- characterise these elusive audiences and illustrate the size of the challenge facing policy makers,
- demonstrate the importance of addressing these groups in a policy context,
- outline some new approaches that are currently being developed to help identify and assist these groups,
- and scope out the requirements for moving forward to a comprehensive package of help for those that cannot respond to the traditional energy efficiency programmes.

Characterising the elusive audiences

Despite this array of help, information and incentives to become more energy efficient there still exists a significant number of households who cannot or will not take up help or make changes to their energy consumption. Who are these elusive audiences that do not respond to any of these programmes? This next section aims to characterise these audiences into two broad groups: Those that are “hard to help”, and those that are “hard to reach”. Each audience is defined and where possible the number of individuals that it incorporates is illustrated.

HARD TO HELP

In this paper the hard to help are classified as those who live in homes that cannot be made more energy efficient using the cost effective measures and technologies prescribed by the programmes in Table 2. They fall into two main categories: “Non-standard homes” and “Homes off the gas network”. Definitions of each of these are provided below along with an estimate of the number of homes affected.

1. **Non-standard homes:** Those living in non-cavity wall homes make up the majority of this category. Non-cavity walls covers solid walls of various thickness, traditional timber and half timber frame houses built before 1944 and non-traditional forms of construction, including “no fines” a method of constructing concrete panel houses pouring the concrete into frames in situ, or other post-war prefabricated or system housing. The most common form of solid wall housing is 9-inch thick brick construction (Pett, 2002).

The English House Condition Survey of 1996 estimates the total number of non-cavity houses at around 7.3 million, approximately 36% of the total number of dwellings in England (DTLR, 1996). The total figure for all non-cavity wall dwellings in Britain stands at around 8.7 million (Pett, 2002).

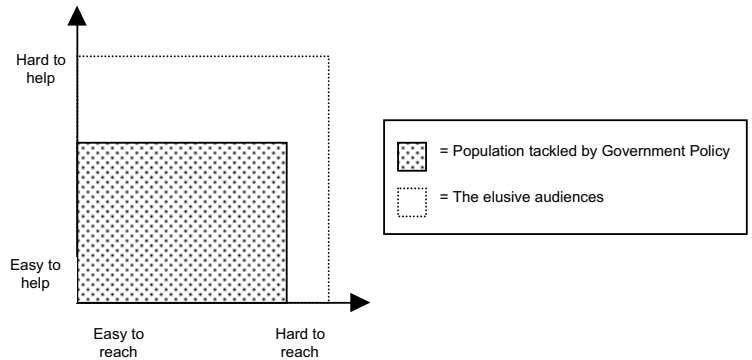


Figure 1: Population targeted by Government energy efficiency policy and the elusive audiences not yet helped by national programmes.

2. **Homes off the gas network:** Approximately 4.5 million households in Great Britain – 20% of the total – rely on fuels other than mains gas for their energy supplies. The vast majority of these households, which are overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas, have no access to mains gas. This limits the ability of consumers, including the disadvantaged, to choose from the range of fuels and benefit from the range of prices at which those fuels are offered. Of the predominant energy sources, natural gas tends to carry relatively low emissions and other environmental advantages, to be cheaper and to provide more affordable warmth (DTI, 2001).

HARD TO REACH

The “hard to reach” are classified in this paper as those who are not included in or influenced by any of the government programmes listed in Table 1. They fall into 3 categories: “Low income, ineligible households”, “Non-claiming households” and “Isolated households”. An overriding challenge with this hard to reach audience is defining exactly how many households it consists of. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that there may be significant numbers of individuals in each category that are not being reached by government programmes, but they are a hidden group about which little is known. All figures used in this paper to characterise this group are therefore estimates. Each category of hard to reach audiences is dealt with in turn:

1. Low income, ineligible households⁴

These are households that do not have sufficient disposable income to improve the energy efficiency of their homes themselves. However their income is not sufficiently low to allow them to qualify for income support⁵, so they are also not eligible for help from government programmes providing free energy efficiency measures.

4. These households will cover all housing groups from those in the private sector (e.g. owner occupiers and those in private rented accommodation) to those in the social housing sector, those in social housing make up approximately 35% of this group. In the cases of those in social housing (i.e. provided by a housing association or local government) additional help may be provided in some instances, for owner occupiers and those in the private rented sector it will still fall to the individual householder to make their own energy efficiency improvements.

5. Government issued social security payments, given to those on exceptionally low incomes as a minimum income allowance, provided to the long term sick or disabled, and those seeking work.

Table 3: Numbers of pensioners not claiming income related benefits in 2000/2001.

Type of Benefit	Number of pensioners claiming benefit*	Appx. % of pensioners NOT claiming benefit**	Appx. Number of pensioners NOT claiming benefit
Income Support	1 700 000	29	695 000
Housing Benefit	1 700 000	11	210 000
Council Tax Benefit	2 400 000	33	1 180 000

* DWP, 2001b

** Age Concern, 2002

12.9 million people in Britain are classed as “low income”⁶ (DWP, 2002b). Of these approximately 6.4 million claim Government benefits that make them eligible for the major government energy efficiency programmes, e.g. Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance, Minimum Income Guarantee etc. (DWP, 2002a).

Therefore, up to approximately 6.5 million households could be living with low incomes that prevent energy efficiency activity; but as they are ineligible for benefits they are also ineligible for help under the WarmFront programme, the primary initiative for promoting energy efficiency in low income households.

Because low income is the nature of this group, a large proportion of the households it contains are also likely to be fuel poor⁷.

2. Non-claiming households

Non-claiming households can be defined as those that have sufficiently low income to make them eligible for income support but choose not to claim these benefits, so making them ineligible for help from government programmes that provide energy efficiency measures. They are also unable to afford energy saving measures themselves.

In 2000/2001 the numbers of pensioners not taking up benefits they were eligible to receive stood at:

- 22-36% – Not claiming Income Support
- 7-15% – Not claiming Housing Benefit
- 30-36% – Not claiming Council Tax Benefit
- (Source: Age Concern, 2002)

Table 3 shows how these percentages equate to actual numbers of pensioners. These figures overlap to an extent (some pensioners will not claim more than one benefit for which they are eligible) but this illustrates that at least 1.18 million pensioners, already on low incomes, are not claiming support that would in turn make them eligible for assistance in becoming more energy efficient.

3. Isolated households

This audience is particularly difficult to characterise. It is made up of households that may be physically isolated from national programmes; for example those in rural areas – who do not readily access advice, information and other benefits, and may find that the information and help available is not

well targeted to their particular situation (Baker, 2002). Approximately 4 million households in Britain are in rural areas, 19% of the total (DTLR, 1996); with up to a quarter of them classed as fuel poor (BRE, 2001).

Households in all areas may also be “ideologically” isolated from these programmes. There is some anecdotal evidence that even when presented with low cost (or free) energy efficiency measures some householders will turn them down, or accept the measures but not use them – or not change their behaviour to maximise their impact. For example:

- Through the Energy Saving Trust’s HECAAction programme⁸ there have been some examples of households refusing energy efficient heating on the grounds that it is “unhealthy” and exacerbates chronic conditions such as asthma. Many pensioners in particular will cite the health benefits of sleeping in a room with fresh air as a reason for leaving the heating on all night but keeping the window open.
- In Scotland a recent study revisiting a group of tenements in Glasgow that were refurbished to high standards of energy efficiency 10-years ago, has shown a high level of misuse of energy efficient boilers, not using thermostatic equipment etc. Householders had a tendency not to rely on the central heating or electric storage heaters and instead used the focal point fires and other forms of independent room heaters (EAS, 2002).

These examples are not supported by any nationwide empirical data, but it is likely that there is a large audience of households that remain un-convinced or un-reached by the arguments of the energy efficiency lobby.

SO HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED?

Hard to help

- 3.5 million homes are off the gas network, unable to take advantage of energy efficient heating etc.
- 8.7 million homes are classified as “hard to heat” i.e. they are solid wall or non-cavity wall construction that makes many of the conventional cost effective energy saving measures impractical or impossible to install.
- In total approximately 40% of homes could be hard to help.

6. Low income” is defined as 60% of the median income after deducting housing costs.

7. Although the fuel poor are being addressed in the Warm Homes Act, the current methods of identifying the fuel poor mean that the programmes in place are only available to those eligible for income benefits.

8. HECAAction” is a government funded grant programme. Developed to “pump-prime” energy efficiency activity in Local Authorities; to help them formulate schemes that would ensure the delivery of the 30% improvement in domestic energy efficiency set down by the Home Energy Conservation Act.

Hard to reach

- 6.5 million earn too much to get benefits and so access government sponsored help – but probably don't earn enough to pay for energy saving measures.
- At least 1.18 million pensioners are not claiming benefits that would enable them to receive state sponsored energy efficiency measures, and make them eligible for earmarked help from energy suppliers.
- 4 million households are in rural areas, around one quarter of these are fuel poor.
- Up to 30% of households could be hard to reach.

Note that the two audiences and their sub-groups will overlap to some extent:

- The “hard to help” sub-group statistics are not mutually exclusive. It is estimated that around 875 000 households are both non-cavity wall construction *and* off the gas network, and that of these around 46% are also fuel poor (BRE, personal communication).
- Within the “hard to reach” group the figure for non-claiming households represents a sub-group of the low income, ineligible households; one that has an even lower income, and is amongst the most vulnerable members of society.
- There is also some considerable overlap between the hard to reach “isolated households” and hard to help homes. Recent scoping papers (Baker, 2002 & DTI, 2001) identified the problem of lack of access to mains gas as a particular issue in rural areas. In addition, up to 25% of the rural fuel poor live in non-cavity wall homes *and* have no access to the gas network; compared to just 5% of the urban fuel poor (BRE, personal communication).
- Many of those in the low income groups described previously may also be living in hard to help homes. The numbers of fuel poor living in non-cavity wall homes has been estimated at 2 million homes – around 44% of those categorised at fuel poor (Pett, 2002). Additionally, up to 1.3 million fuel poor are living off the gas network (DTI, 2001).

In summary, Figure 2 illustrates the audiences that are not being helped by current government energy efficiency programmes.

Why target these elusive groups?

The primary motivation for targeting these elusive groups is to ensure that the energy efficiency and emissions reductions targets set for the domestic sector are met within the timeframes shown in Table 1. Both these groups represent a proportion of the population that should be considered sufficiently large to warrant action on this ground alone. In addition, addressing these audiences is also necessary for reasons of social equity, as many of those affected are from low income and vulnerable groups.

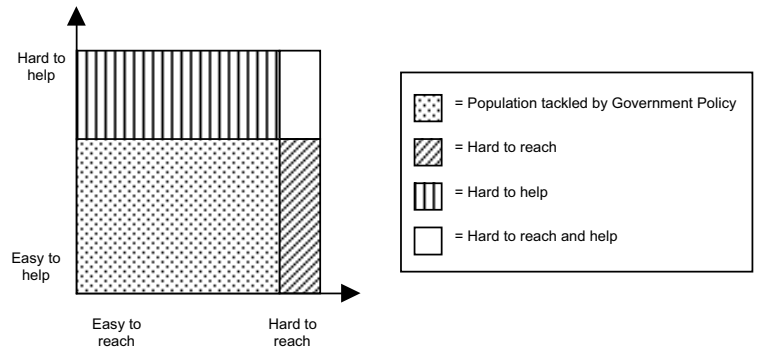


Figure 2: Population targeted by Government energy efficiency policy and the hard to help, and hard to reach audiences.

Considering the targets mentioned in Table 1, the following discussion and analysis illustrates how environmental targets and the most vulnerable members of society will suffer without additional attention directed towards these elusive audiences.

MEETING GOVERNMENT TARGETS

Home Energy Conservation Act and domestic energy efficiency

The Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) places an obligation on all local authorities in the UK to achieve a 30% improvement in energy efficiency in their domestic housing stock. Currently, there are no co-ordinated efforts (through HECA or any other national programmes) to tackle the energy efficiency of hard to help homes that make up almost 40% of the British housing stock. The measures available to bring hard to help homes up to a suitable standard of efficiency are either considered too expensive to justify the outlay (e.g. External wall insulation or cladding for non-cavity wall homes), or are new technologies that don't have developed markets and are difficult to introduce on a national scale (e.g. Woodchip fuelled domestic CHP for homes off the gas network). This means that the only measures promoted by national programmes as domestic energy efficiency solutions are those deemed “cost effective” for the generic home type that is supplied with mains gas and has cavity walls and loft spaces to be insulated.

However, the analysis below shows that if only the easy to help homes are assisted there is likely to be a shortfall in the domestic energy efficiency targets required by the HECA. Figure 3 illustrates the energy efficiency improvements to the national housing stock that can be achieved through a range of energy saving improvements to existing facilities (Modelling based on DTLR, 1996). The “Improvements over existing facilities” as abbreviated in Fig. 3 are⁹:

- Nothing – cw & gas = homes that are on the gas network and have *no* energy efficiency measures get cavity wall insulation *and* gas central heating.

9. Assumption is that loft insulation is added with any first measure, whether heating or insulation.

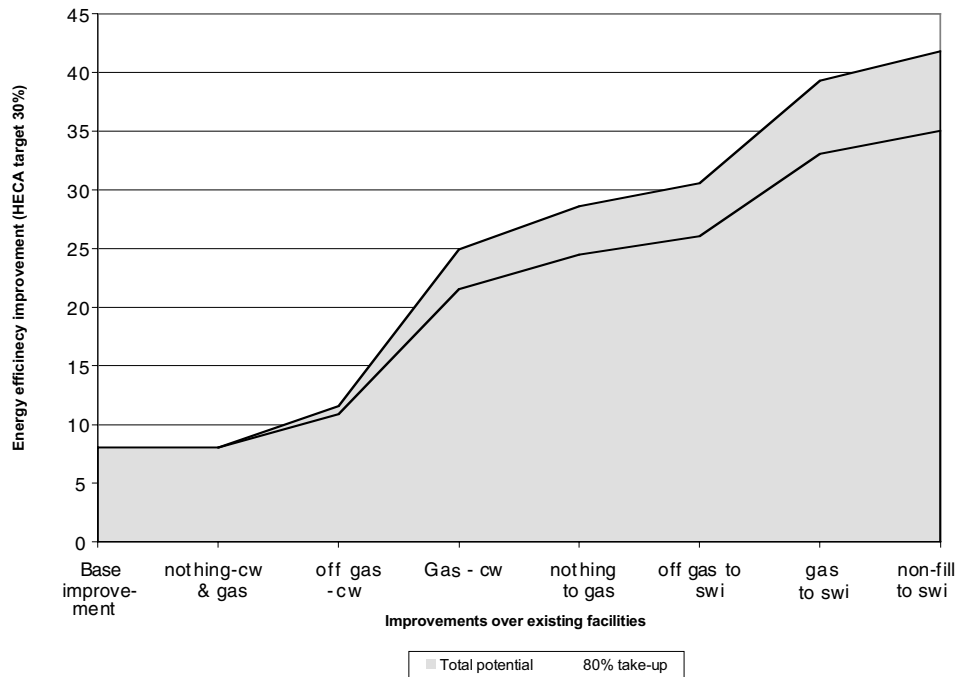


Figure 3: Improvements to domestic sector housing stock required to meet 30% HECA targets and beyond.

- Off Gas – cw = Homes off the gas network get cavity wall insulation.
- Gas – cw = Homes on the gas network get cavity wall insulation.
- Nothing to gas = Homes off the gas network get connected to the network, and have gas central heating.
- Off gas to swi = Non-cavity wall homes off the gas network get solid wall insulation.
- Gas to swi = Non-cavity wall homes on the gas network get solid wall insulation.
- Non-fill to swi = Homes where it is not possible to fill the cavity wall get solid wall insulation.

The “base improvement” in domestic energy efficiency currently stands at around 8%. This represents the 8% improvement on 2000 baseline that has already been achieved by Local Authorities working on their HECA obligation (DEFRA, 2002). Each set of “Improvements to existing facilities” shows how an improvement of this nature to the national housing stock would increase the overall energy efficiency of the domestic sector. Percentage improvements to energy efficiency are shown where 80 and 100% of the total market potential for each measure is met. All energy efficiency improvements from the “Base improvement” up to and including the “Gas-cw” improvements are measures that are currently occurring under the existing government programmes. In some instances, the other improvements are happening on a smaller scale through local programmes; however there is no nationwide promotion of these measures.

Figure 3 shows that even if all of the measures promoted through existing programmes were implemented to 100% of their market potential the maximum improvement in energy efficiency that could be achieved would be 25%. Furthermore, with a slightly more realistic uptake of 80% of full potential the efficiency gains would only be around 22%; well short of the HECA target.

To progress improvements in energy efficiency beyond this level the hard to help homes must be addressed. Homes should be brought on to the gas network and, more significantly, non-cavity wall homes should be properly insulated. Without addressing the issue of hard to heat homes it is unlikely that the HECA target of a 30% improvement in domestic energy efficiency by 2010 can be met.

Warm Homes Act and the fuel poor

The Warm Homes Act commits the UK Government to eradicating fuel poverty by 2010. In 2001 a “Fuel Poverty Strategy” was developed to scope out the Government’s plans for meeting this target (DTI & DEFRA, 2001). As, cited in this Strategy, the main programmes directed at solving this problem are benefits linked (E.g. WarmFront assistance will only go out to those on income or disability related benefits) and do not offer any more than standard energy efficiency measures, suitable for the “easy to help” homes. WarmFront (The flagship programme in the Fuel Poverty Strategy) defines a standard package of measures made up of “cost effective” technologies¹⁰; homes that cannot be helped by these measures (e.g. those with solid walls) will just miss out on the assistance.

As stated previously, the incidence of fuel poor amongst the elusive audiences is high:

10. Note: In Scotland the equivalent programme, “WarmDeal”, does include solid wall insulation amongst the measures offered to fuel poor households.

- 2 million fuel poor households live in hard to help homes (44% of all fuel poor),
- 1.3 million fuel poor are off the gas network,
- At least 1.18 million (likely fuel poor) pensioners are not claiming benefits they are entitled to,
- There is a low uptake of both benefits and government programmes in rural areas, where just less than 1 million fuel poor are currently found.

These are all households that require assistance that goes beyond the generic, “cost effective” help offered by the WarmFront programme. Therefore, without additional initiatives that go offer solutions beyond these standardised measures it is likely that around 50% of the fuel poor will still remain unaided by the Warm Homes Act.

Energy Efficiency Commitment and reaching vulnerable households

The Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC) is one of the mechanisms cited by both the Fuel Poverty Strategy and the UK Climate Change Programme as a means to achieving overall emissions reductions in the domestic sector and bringing households out of fuel poverty. 50% of all savings achieved under EEC must come from schemes targeted at customers receiving income-related benefits or tax credits. In this way it can be used as a major tool for helping the fuel poor.

There is no minimum spend put on energy suppliers on how they achieve this saving, with the assumption that this will allow suppliers to meet their target in the most cost effective way possible. The suggested measures for energy suppliers to install through EEC schemes are all “cost effective” technologies with established markets (e.g. Loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, draught proofing, condensing boilers etc.). There are no technologies for use in hard to help homes included on the list (DEFRA, 2001).

Competition between energy suppliers for the “easy to reach and help” audiences is very high. There is some concern from analysts that there will be a diminishing return on these easy pickings, and that to meet the requirements of the EEC by 2005 some attention will have to be turned to the hard to help audiences if the full 50% target is to be met.

However, under current EEC guidance although energy suppliers are in the position to address the difficult properties, many are reluctant to do so. They are cautious about taking on projects deemed to require the more expensive measures *not* recommended by programmes such as WarmFront. In some instances this is being overcome; in particular where energy suppliers are working with Housing Associations on partial refurbishments where solid wall insulation is a cost effective option because some of the preparatory work (scaffolding etc.) is already in place. But these activities are not widespread and the impetus to carry them out is limited to very specific projects.

How can they be assisted?

Addressing these issues and working to ensure that these important targets are met is a developing area of activity in the UK. Projects are still very much at a local and embryonic stage, but there have been some small steps forward that provide an interesting insight into this issue.

- Hard to reach audiences are beginning to be tackled through new initiatives in inter-agency working. This ranges from using health professionals to identify patients living in cold energy inefficient homes, to working with schools to promote the message of energy efficiency alongside relevant aspects of the curriculum.
- Hard to help homes are slightly less advanced. They have also been identified by the Government “Fuel Poverty Advisory Group”¹¹ as one of the major areas of work for 2003 and pilot study into effective alternatives for non-cavity walled homes and houses off the gas network was commissioned in mid 2002. Otherwise much of the work in this area remains at research stage or exists only in small pockets of good practice around the UK.

Using some short case study examples the next section shows how progress is being made through inter-agency working and interaction between a broad range of actors in the energy efficiency field and beyond. The results from a recent scoping exercise are also used to discuss the potential next steps, taking these small pockets of experience and making them work on a national scale.

EXAMPLE 1: REACHING ELUSIVE AUDIENCES

The most interesting developments in trying to reach out to elusive audiences have been in the growth of new partnerships with the health sector. There are already well established links between the ill health effects of cold, damp housing; and increasingly evidence is being developed to show that *energy efficiency* can play a part in alleviating these problems, making homes warmer and more comfortable and reducing the impact of cold related illness. A large number of frontline health professionals will go into the homes of their patients and clients, and so are ideally placed to make the link between a cold, energy inefficient home and poor health. Patients living in these conditions are often in this “elusive” category, not receiving (energy efficiency) help or information from any other sources; in this instance health professionals are well positioned to pass on information and advice, and to refer clients on to organisations able to install energy efficiency measures.

The benefits for both the energy efficiency and health sectors are clear: more homes receive energy efficiency help and advice, and vulnerable patients have their health improved through better living conditions.

HECAction & Local Authority Initiatives

In an effort to promote this kind of partnership working 22 HECAction schemes were given grant funding in April 2001. Headed by Local Authority Energy and Housing de-

11. The Fuel Poverty Advisory Group is an Advisory Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by DTI and DEFRA. Its primary task is to report on the progress of delivery of the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy and to propose and implement improvements to regional or local mechanisms for its delivery.

partments, these schemes have been set up as partnerships with local health professionals. They aim to develop a referral network of frontline health staff (District nurses, local doctors, occupational therapists, health visitors, midwives etc.) that will be well placed to identify households suffering ill health effects from cold, damp, energy inefficient homes.

Progress since 2001 has been steady, with over 600 health professionals now actively involved in partnership work with the 22 schemes. The schemes have been particularly successful at improving the uptake of existing programmes and grants by using this different approach to finding eligible households. Anecdotal reports have shown that where health professionals are actively involved in referring both they and their clients have been very pleased with the measures installed and the subsequent improvement to their living conditions (Ramsay & Wade, 2002).

The majority of these initiatives have taken on a similar format, outlined below are the main stages that most of the schemes have progressed through¹²:

1. An existing link between the local authority and health sector (e.g. on anti-smoking initiatives, preventing teenage pregnancies etc) helps to establish which stakeholders are well placed to take action and participate in partnership working. Those schemes that did not have this existing link had to work harder to develop initial contact, usually through face-to-face meetings with numerous senior health sector staff.
2. From this initial contact the schemes set up a steering group to direct the initial phases of the initiative. Made up of health and local authority representatives (along with other community groups where appropriate) the group helps to develop marketing materials that will appeal to the health sector and highlight the issues of cold homes and ill health – and how this can be helped by energy efficiency measures. Many steering groups also offered guidance on devising briefing sessions to tell health professionals about the initiatives, and some even nominated an “Energy Champion” from within the health sector who would raise interest amongst his/her colleagues. All schemes found that it was vitally important to keep briefing sessions short and health focussed and to be prepared to tag briefings on to existing health sector meetings; health professionals just did not have the time or the interest in anything else.
3. All of the schemes then set up a simple referral system, whereby health professionals could refer patient details on to the local authority (or an energy agency). The local authority would then visit the patient’s home, assess their need for energy efficiency measures and sort out the appropriate grant funding or financing package to get those measures installed. It is very important that the referring health professional is not expected to do much more than just refer a client; and that every client they refer get *something* from the referral, even if it is just advice, a home energy survey or free CFLs.
4. Many of the schemes found that it took considerably longer than expected to build up a strong partnership and an active referral network. Keeping the network informed about progress and reinforcing the message with regular briefing feedback sessions is very important to ensure that partnership is sustainable in the longer term.

Over the last two years of running, these 22 schemes have shown that using a different approach to identify vulnerable audiences can have a growing impact on identifying hard to reach homes that could benefit from energy efficiency. However, they are still very much local initiatives – targeting small populations in discrete areas. On an increasingly national scale, two UK energy suppliers are also trying to use these health networks to promote energy efficiency to domestic customers that they have not previously been able to reach¹³.

Energy Suppliers promoting health through energy efficiency

Using the same concept as the HECAction schemes, energy supplier npower has developed the “Health through warmth scheme”. Working in partnership with local authorities and local community groups, well over 500 health professionals have been briefed on health and energy efficiency issues through the scheme. Many of them are now making referrals to the initiative – with the 1 000th household helped in summer 2002. Initially developed in and around Birmingham this £10 million (15.2 million Euro) initiative is now being rolled out in other regions across England.

Taking this one step further, energy supplier British Gas has come together with a large energy efficiency installer and numerous community partners including local authorities, health professionals, national and local charities and community organisations to deliver a programme worth £150 million (228 million Euro) into households across Great Britain who experience difficulties keeping their homes warm. The Home Essentials for Life Programme (HELP), aims to improve the lives of people who are living in fuel poverty, through offering a holistic package of help that promotes energy efficiency alongside not only health issues but also income and security concerns too.

The package of assistance offered through HELP includes: installation of energy efficiency measures (cavity wall insulation, loft insulation etc.), a benefits health check and disability advice (to identify benefit and other grant entitlement and provide assistance with claiming procedures), installation of security measures (e.g. spy holes, safety chains and door bolts), provision of essential appliances (e.g. fridges and freezers for families who have to manage without them) and schemes for local children through targeted community programmes. (EAGA, 2002)

The HELP scheme was only launched in Summer 2002, so results on its progress are not yet available – however this and the npower scheme do illustrate the potential for energy suppliers to take the lead in finding new ways of marketing energy efficiency to hard to reach audiences and shows that this level of activity is beginning to be possible on a national scale.

12. For a more detailed discussion of this type of scheme see Ramsay & Wade (2002) and ACE & PIP (1999).

13. This contribution from energy suppliers has been stimulated through the EEC and also through broader corporate social responsibility drivers.

Changing structures to assist integrated working

Behind these local and national initiatives there are also more strategic changes taking place. Changes in the way the UK health sector operates to encourage a patient focussed approach that promotes partnership working wherever it will help to deliver seamless frontline care.

The main feature of these changes is the devolution of primary care from regional and national centres down to local level. Doctors Surgeries and other frontline care workers (e.g. Distinct Nurses, Health Visitors etc), have been grouped into "Primary Care Trusts" (PCTs) that oversee the health needs of particular local areas. As part of this restructuring these PCTs have been given far greater control over their budgets as well as responsibility for developing health care plans for their locality that respond to the particular needs of the community they serve. Each PCT in the country must develop a "Local Plan" that responds to the needs of the immediate community – paying particular attention to a number of government defined priorities.

PCTs are being encouraged to work with a range of partners (including local authorities) to help them meet the needs of their community and deliver on the priority areas. This is a positive step – not only because of the direct endorsement of partnership working, but also because some of the priority areas are key places where energy efficiency in the home can have a dramatic preventative effect. For example, the health and social care priorities for older people include:

"The promotion of independent living and health and active life" along with specific targets to "Improve the quality of life and independence of older people so that they can live at home wherever possible" and ensure that "each year there will be less than a 1% growth in admissions and no growth in readmissions"(NHS, 2002).

These are all areas where the HECAAction schemes (mentioned above) have shown that energy efficiency can have an impact. Especially in the homes of the elderly, proper insulation and heating systems make homes healthier as well as more energy efficient. Elderly occupants can stay in their own homes for longer, living healthier lives and not blocking hospital beds.

The full impact of these changes is only just starting to be realised but it is clear that a greater openness to partnership working within the health sector can only serve to benefit the cause of promoting energy efficiency to a wider audience.

EXAMPLE 2: HELPING ELUSIVE AUDIENCES

As highlighted above solutions to assist the hard to help audiences are far less advanced than the hard to reach initiatives described previously. Identified as a growing concern by numerous government advisory bodies this area is only just beginning to be tackled. In some cases adequate technical solutions have yet to be found to help those in problem homes; where solutions are available a lack of best practice on installation and inadequate funding sources still means that very few concerted efforts have been made to implement energy efficiency refurbishment for hard to help homes.

Social housing providers are often looked to for innovation in these areas. Being strictly regulated and highly accountable these organisations are usually at the forefront of most developments in housing. In this instance although many social housing providers are beginning to become

aware of the problems surrounding hard to help homes, very few have actually begun tackling their problem properties to any great extent.

A recent review of local authority activity on hard to help homes has also come to similar conclusions (EST, personal communication). Although there are pockets of activity across the UK, few local authorities are actively addressing the issue. The additional cost of solutions for hard to help homes has been cited as one of the main barriers for addressing this area, along with a lack of funding sources to meet this outlay. As outlined in the sections above – although there is a growing awareness of the problem, those best placed to solve it do not feel that the government programmes promoting energy efficiency allow or encourage them to address the issues.

Moving forwards

Recent work by ACE has highlighted some of the policy and strategic solutions that are required to start to make hard to help homes more of a viable option for assistance (Pett J, 2002). To continue to build support for those in hard to help homes will require greater activity in preparing the market to deliver the changes necessary, outlined below are some of the key findings from the report and suggestions for future developments and capacity building.

- **Marketing:** There is a need to move the energy efficiency marketing agenda forwards. In order to solve the problems of the hard to reach and hard to help new messages need to be developed, messages that go beyond the traditional "energy efficiency is cost effective" and take advantage of the other social and environmental benefits as well as linking energy efficiency to other issues, such as health, lifestyle and community.
- **Lifecycle costs and benefits:** A greater understanding of the true lifecycle costs and benefits involved in providing solutions for the hard to help homes is essential; firstly for moving this issue further up the political agenda, and secondly to illustrate how on a longer term solutions for these homes can help contribute to the low carbon future in a cost effective way.
- **Best Practice Dissemination:** Turning best practice into standard practice is an obvious challenge, but it is essential if markets are to be successfully transformed and solutions for hard to help homes made widely available.
- **Skills and Standards:** It is essential that the industry can rise to the challenge of addressing these elusive audiences. Skills gaps, and shortages of expertise in the industry must be addressed. An understanding of the importance of energy efficiency should be introduced into a range of professional qualifications. This forms the backbone of developing better relationships with planners, developers, health workers and elected representatives. In order to address them successfully, the cross-sectoral costs and benefits case needs to have been developed, and energy practitioners must understand the need to 'talk their language' to raise the profile of energy efficiency in the homes of these elusive audiences.

Also, on a national scale the changes and policy developments happening now will go some way to supporting these market requirements. There is a general move towards integration of services and cross-sectoral working across government, local government, related services and utilities. Initiatives such as the Energy Efficiency Commitment are encouraging energy suppliers, local authorities and other housing providers to work together to target energy efficiency solutions. Along with the obligation on all Local Authorities through the Home Energy Conservation Act, that again encourages greater cross-sectoral working to achieve the required improvements in domestic energy efficiency.

The changes within the health sector are particularly salient; mentioned in example 1, the devolution of planning and budgeting power to local health providers can potentially have a tremendous impact on building an ethos of partnership working and holistic care. There is potential for health and social care to be integrated into the wider issues of local environmental protection in the areas where it overlaps with health care and beyond.

From a European perspective there is some scope for greater awareness of energy efficiency in general to be injected into the domestic sector. The forthcoming Buildings Directive may help to raise awareness of energy use in domestic buildings through compulsory labelling of all domestic dwellings, as could the labelling of all buildings in public use. Furthermore the proposed European Energy Services Directive, could be instrumental in introducing more stringent targets that could drive energy suppliers to seek innovative solutions for reaching and helping new audiences in order to meet their obligation.

Conclusion

National energy efficiency programmes are by their nature a tool for making generic changes to a wide ranging audience; such large initiatives cannot be tailored to the exact needs of every individual. However, what this paper illustrates is that, by the UK example, relying only on these large generic programmes and by offering only generic solutions to a complex problem significant numbers of households are being missed out. They are not getting the information or help they require to become more energy efficient; to the extent that environmental targets in the medium and longer term may be compromised.

Although the exact reasons for the existence of these elusive audiences (i.e. fuel poverty, solid walled homes, etc.) may differ across Europe; bringing in those that are not being addressed by any policies, programmes or initiatives is likely to be a challenge that faces most European Governments.

Addressing these issues through broadening the horizons on what is cost effective – bringing in community partnerships and the expertise of other disciplines in identifying and relating to excluded audiences is essential for moving the market for energy efficiency forward. Not acting as just the energy efficiency lobby – but integrating the message with issues of social equity, poverty, health and education to have a wider, longer lasting impact across all areas of society.

References

- ACE & PiP (1999) Health & Energy Efficiency: Working in Partnerships for Healthy Homes, London.
- Age Concern (2002) Age Concern Fact Card - Older People in the United Kingdom: Some basic facts 2001. Age Concern England, London.
- Baker, W (2002) Rural Fuel Poverty: Defining a Research Agenda. Centre for Sustainable Energy, publ. EAGA Charitable Trust, Cumbria.
- DEFRA (2002) Home Energy Conservation Act 1995: Fifth Progress Report. Data from 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2001. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.
- DEFRA (2001) Energy Efficiency Commitment 2001-2005: Consultation Proposals. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, August 2001, London.
- DETR (2000) Climate Change: The UK Programme. Department for Environment Transport and the Regions, November 2000, HMSO, London.
- DTI (2001) Report of the working group on extending the gas network. Department of Trade and Industry, December 2001, London.
- DTI & DEFRA (2001) The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs & Department of Trade and Industry, publ. DTI, November 2001, London.
- DTLR (1996) English House Condition Survey 1996. Research Analysis and Evaluation Division, Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions, HMSO, London.
- DWP (2002a) Statistical Summary - September 2002. Analytical Services Directorate, Department of Work and Pensions, September 2000, London.
- DWP (2002b) Households below average income. Department of Work and Pensions, HMSO.
- DWP (2001) Statistical Summary - September 2001. Analytical Services Directorate, Department of Work and Pensions, September 2000, London.
- EAGA (2002) Eaga Partnership to deliver HELP from British Gas to Fuel Poor Households, Press Release, 24th July 2002, www.eaga.co.uk/pressreleases/HELPpressrelease250702.htm
- EAS (2002) Revisiting Easthall: 10 years on. Alembic Research. Publ. Energy Action Scotland, March 2002, Glasgow.
- NEA (2002) Guidance Note for Primary Care Trusts: PCT Local Plans and Fuel Poverty 2003-2006, Promoting Health through Affordable Warmth. National Energy Action & Energy Saving Trust, Newcastle Upon Tyne.
- NHS (2002) Improvement, Expansion and Reform: The Next Three Years. Department of Health, London.
- Pett, J (2002) Affordable Warmth in "Hard to Heat" Homes: Finding a way forward. Association for the Conservation of Energy, London.
- Ramsay, L & Wade, J (2002) HECAction 2001/2002: Health Challenge Sector Evaluation – Interim Report. Association for the Conservation of Energy & Energy Saving Trust, unpublished (Summary available on www.ukace.org).

Glossary

ACE	Association for the Conservation of Energy
BRE	Building Research Establishment
CHP	Combined Heat and Power
CFL	Compact Fluorescent Light
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions ¹⁴
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry
DTLR	Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions ¹⁵
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EAS	Energy Action Scotland
EEC	Energy Efficiency Commitment
EESoP	Energy Efficiency Standards of Performance
HECA	Home Energy Conservation Act
HELP	Home Essentials for Life Programme
MTP	Market Transformation Programme
NEA	National Energy Action
NHS	National Health Service
PiP	Projects in Partnership
PCT	Primary Care Trust
VAT	Value Added Tax

14. DETR is no longer in existence, became DEFRA and DTLR in 2001.

15. DTLR is no longer in existence, became Department of Transport and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2002.