



Community Wellbeing Funding :2. Health Inequalities

Project: Home Energy MOT and reducing energy bills

Report to 31 Mar 2025

Why did we request the funding?

The aim of the project is to help local people find ways to cut energy bills and energy use, while making their homes and lives more comfortable. The funding enables us to reach more people, target those in greater need, and offer more support for people to make changes that work. It also supports the journey to improved energy efficiency for community buildings.

Actions and achievements to date

Training and technical support for our volunteers has been provided by Energy Efficiency Consultants who work with local authorities in this area. EEC also support us with technical advice as required. We have set up the protocol for visits, a record sheet, and a fact sheet with links to further info to leave with clients.

Defining the offer: Visits were timed where possible for the cool of the morning, when the thermal camera is most effective as the temperature contrast is greatest. Normally two volunteers would attend, with KCAG name badges. An initial chat with the client would establish their concerns, and basic information on the home construction, level of insulation/heating etc We then tour the home together, using the thermal camera to spot cold areas and steer the discussion. Finally, we review the points raised, agree on actions including whether grants might be available; offer free items and subsidies from our project, where appropriate; and leave a checklist of energy-saving actions and sources of further information. We follow this up by an email summarising the outcome of the visit, and including the thermal camera images, and following up any actions we have agreed to take.

Working with Community Home Solutions. CHS on behalf of South Staffordshire facilitate rolling out grants for retrofit of homes that qualify. We have referred several people to them, of whom 4 have received free retrofit under grant. They have our Home Energy MOT publicity materials to pass to anyone they visit who is not grant eligible. CHS have also supported us with technical advice and contacts.

Publicity: We have publicised the service widely, including social media posts, shared with local popular sites; info on our website, with application form; posters and flyers for local display and door to door delivery; and advertising in Kinver News (our quarterly local newsheet which is delivered to every home), as well as a dedicated phone line for those who prefer this to using social media. In target areas where fuel poverty could be more likely, we've delivered leaflets door to door. The aim is to make the service accessible to all.

Incentives: We provide small items (draught proofing, LED bulbs, radiator foil; humidity meters etc) free during visits, where appropriate, and advertise this to encourage interest. Following initial experience with the issues that arose, we also offer subsidies for loft insulation materials; and



dehumidifiers. These have proved popular.

Targetting those in need: We have targeted those likely to be in fuel poverty or have other needs, by door-to-door leafletting in areas identified by mapping of EPCs and council tax bands. A Community Home Solutions (CHS) representative came to our Senior Citizens Christmas event to publicise the availability of grants alongside our own volunteers advertising the support we could give.

Specific support for those in need: We have been able to help those in need by connecting them to CHS and grant support where applicable. For the rest, we provide free materials and/or services of a handyman or electrician for minor works such as draughtproofing, fitting LEDs or improving ventilation control, where the client would have difficulty funding or managing this.

Reach: We have helped to improve the energy efficiency of 35 homes, with some more in the pipeline. Our targeting of specific areas has resulted in a greater proportion of clients from these areas, many elderly or with particular needs. This project is having significant impact locally, and is making a real difference supporting local people to cut their energy use. The visits open discussion on changes in behaviour and lifestyle which will reduce energy use and impact on the environment. We plan to repeat the campaign next autumn/winter.

Other areas: We have had requests from groups in other parishes wanting to learn from our experience.

Community Buildings: We are working with the managers of local community buildings, including the Parish Council offices; the Senior Citizens Club; the Methodist Church Hall, and St Peter's Church Hall. A local qualified energy assessor has already carried out two surveys pro bono and is booked to do the Methodist Church Hall during April. These surveys would otherwise cost around £2000, so we are very grateful for this support.

The surveys have quantified cost benefit of potential improvements. Some recommendations were taken up immediately using own funds, so the survey itself has triggered effective action. (e.g. remote control of heating timing at the Senior Citizens, thereby making it possible to adjust heating to bookings, substantially reducing the number of hours the heating was on.) Other improvements have been partially supported via grants, the survey providing the background information to support the application. This includes solar panels at the Parish Offices, and LED lights at the Senior Citizens Club.

Impacts

We plan to do a follow-up survey with clients to enquire what actions they have taken, and what their view is of the Home Energy MOT. It is too early for this as the season is not quite over.

Based on conversations at the time, and uptake of free /subsidised items, we know that at least 4 people and probably twice this have improved their loft insulation. A similar number have made substantial improvements to draught proofing; and several have increased the proportion of LED lights (most people had a few already). Other minor changes have been picked up as well, from discussion during and after the visit and information provided.

Among community buildings, our work has resulted in installation of rooftop solar; installation of improved heating controls, and replacement of lights by LEDs. Further improvements are under discussion going forward.

Our current estimate from these changes is an annual total saving of approximately £3000 and 6 tonnes of CO2.



In addition, we have raised awareness of the issues, and started conversations which will contribute to a gradual sense that aiming for zero carbon is 'normal'. Feedback from the visits has been always positive, and sometimes very grateful.

In the case of community buildings, we believe our work has in each case triggered a transition from ignoring the issue of climate change (and energy costs) as 'too difficult', to embracing it and acknowledging that something can be done, and that it's part of the role of community organisations to lead the way.

Reaching our target clients: The people who respond to our publicity, are often not the people in greatest need. To reach people who may not use social media, and provide greater presence in target areas, we carried out a door-to-door leafletting campaign in areas with a concentration of smaller homes and homes with low EPC ratings, guided by mapped data on Parish Online.

On the plus side, the carbon footprint of a higher-income household is typically greater than low-income – which means that encouraging changes in this group, can have a proportionally greater impact on the local carbon footprint.

Helping the most vulnerable: Community Home Solutions are currently targeting local homes with EPC of F or G, and checking whether they would qualify for grant. However the 'hit rate' of CHS targeted homes which actually qualify for grant is depressingly small, because of the complex structure of the grant rules, and the fact that CHS do not carry out retrofit that would require contribution from the client. We have referred some clients to them, and 3 have been helped by grants who would otherwise not have been identified by CHS. CHS have been very helpful in collaborating with us.

For other clients, who don't qualify for grant, in addition to free items and subsidies (see below) we can provide services of a handyman and electrician to quickly fix small problems, and this has helped several elderly clients.

Turning information into action, overcoming inertia: The thermal camera is excellent for generating engagement with clients -it makes visible the source of draughts, the gaps in loft insulation and so on. As an incentive to make an appointment, we also decided to offer small items free during our visits (LED bulbs, radiator foil, humidity meters, draught excluders etc). We follow up each appointment with a letter, including copies of the thermal camera images taken at the time, to remind people of what was discussed and concluded. We also leave a fact sheet which has links to further information. To encourage further action, we now offer a subsidy for loft insulation materials (subject to check that they are suitable); and towards electric dehumidifiers (to reduce damp/mould where this is an issue).

Time frame: The main season for discussing insulation and energy is winter and spring, especially after the New Year. The cold weather makes the problem seem real, and the thermal camera makes it visible. However the funding for this project was framed as running from early autumn to end of March. We are still carrying out visits during April, and are supporting some clients with works which have not been completed by the end of March. Our work with community buildings is also ongoing. We therefore plan to use residual funds to continue our work, with a renewed campaign starting as the cold weather returns in the autumn.

Reactions to Climate Change: There are still people who react strongly and abusively to the word 'climate', and others who are put off by the phrase, assuming that we are fanatics. This is particularly noticeable as we try to boost our on-line presence. We are seeking ways to limit this, but are also aware of the dilemma – many people have a negative or overwhelmed reaction to the



enormity of the climate challenge, yet it seems irresponsible and dishonest for us to behave as if it's not a real issue. Within the village, we feel that our work is well supported, and that gradually the positive, 'let's get on with it' approach to climate change is gaining traction

Financial update

Total funding: £11,000

Expenditure to end of March 2025

Category	Total £
Engagement and publicity (Social media, website, leaflets, posters)	690.20
Free items to encourage visits and first steps (LED bulbs, draught excluders, radiator foil, humidity meters, door 'dogs')	1,458.86
Small jobs for elderly/less able clients	581.00
Subsidy for loft insulation materials and dehumidifiers	895.99
Insurance	113.91
Total Spent	3,739.96

Pledged/allocated to existing projects

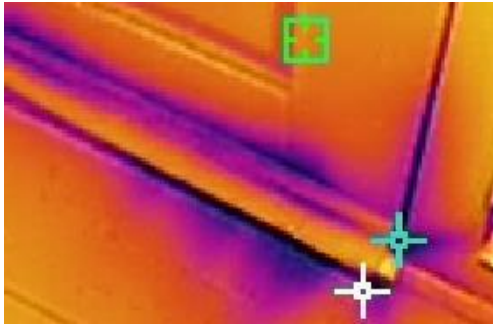
Category	Total £
Community buildings (Senior Citizens, Methodist Church Hall) up to:	4000.00
Subsidy for loft insulation / dehumidifiers (booked but not claimed yet)	600.00
Total Pledged	4600.00
Grand Total spent/pledged	8339.96

Future plans: The main campaign of Home Energy MOTs for 2024/5 is drawing to a close, we just have a few ongoing cases to complete. We intend to resume the MOT campaign next autumn, with a similar approach. We envisage that this will account for the remaining funds. We will continue working with community buildings throughout the summer, reviewing where contribution from our funds could be most effectively made, for example as part-funding to draw in other grants, or other 'priming'.

Case studies and what we've learnt:

Some fixes are simple: The thermal camera highlights draught entry points, which are usually easy to fix. It also demonstrates how effective curtains can be – even in front of double-glazed windows. Open chimneys generate lots of draught, and are easy to plug (temporarily if required) with a 'chimney sheep' or similar. It's also easy to turn down the flow temperature on the boiler – this makes it more efficient, and if the radiators are still keeping you warm, that's money in the bank. Turning down thermostats in unused rooms or bedrooms also helps – and with a humidity meter, you can keep an eye on the risk of condensation. We go through a checklist of 'easy fixer' with all clients, and leave them an info sheet as a reminder.



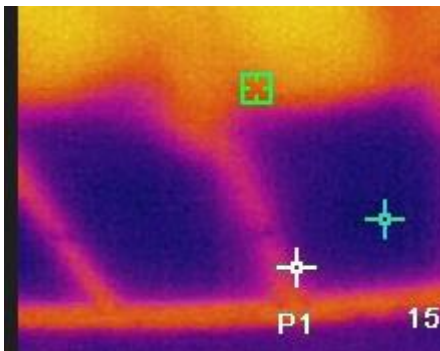


Draught through corner of front door. We offer door 'dogs' to help, as even when the draught is fixed, outside doors are cold.

Off grid: An elderly client in a rural home contacted us because of high energy bills. When visited, her home was very cold. The home is heated by LPG, the price of which has recently risen substantially. In addition, most walls were solid, and uninsulated – but would be suitable for external insulation/cladding. We have referred the client to Community Home Solutions who are currently carrying out a complete retrofit upgrade, including heat pumps, under grant funding. This will improve the warmth of the home, and therefore her wellbeing, as well as reducing energy bills.

Disabled but not grant-eligible: A client has to sleep downstairs because of disability and serious health problems. The bedroom is an extension which is inadequately insulated, including ca 50% gaps in the supposed loft and cavity wall insulation, and is very cold. Because her boiler is relatively modern, and because the EPC records the home as having cavity wall insulation (even though inspection shows some walls are not filled), she does not qualify for grant. We are helping her with insulating this bedroom, to improve her health and well-being; and with other minor changes to cut her bills.

Loft insulation uneven: A common discovery is that loft insulation is not evenly distributed, leaving often large gaps which show up as cold on the thermal camera. Sometimes it's workmen who've moved the insulation to do a job and never put it back. Sometimes it's been carelessly installed, e.g. not spread into the eaves sufficiently. Squirrels and other vermin play their part. The owners are invariably unaware, and the fix is simple.



Uneven loft insulation – incomplete coverage to edge of loft.

Loft insulation not up to modern standards: A large proportion of homes visited only have insulation between the joists, modern standards require a top-up across the joists. This is not cost-effective in the short-term, and for this reason we offer a subsidy sufficient to cover the cost of top-up materials for an average semi. Uptake has been good.

Mould: A home which had recently been substantially refurbished, was experiencing mould upstairs, and cold draughts. The family had teenage children, and was generating a lot of moisture indoors though clothes drying, showers etc. Furthermore upstairs rooms were colder, to save energy, and the warm air from downstairs was moving upwards causing condensation. Despite their efforts to ventilate and ensure air exchange, mould was forming upstairs. We offered a humidity meter, and a contribution towards a dehumidifier, to help with defining and managing the

condensation problem. In this case, we considered that once the problem was better understood, the occupiers would find and implement an appropriate solution.

Excessive ventilation: The elderly client said her home was cold because the bathroom fan was permanently on. The fan had been installed as part of a grant-supported retrofit. At the same time, doors had been shaved to allow floor-level ventilation throughout. The client said her feet were always cold. She lived alone and did not generate a great deal of humidity. It became clear that her extractor fan, even when off, had no protection against back-draught, so that whenever the wind blew, cold air came blowing in. This completely negated the home improvements, left her feeling cold all the time, and increased her bills. Our handyman fixed the fan, and ensured the client could switch it off when required. We gave her a humidity meter with instructions so that she could keep an eye on humidity levels and use the fan appropriately.

We encountered similar issues of excessive ventilation, including fans set to be always on, in several homes which had had grant-backed retrofit.

Air Source Heat Pump: A 1930s detached home, reasonably well insulated, had a heat pump installed last year. The owner was very happy with both the process, and the outcome. He keeps the house at a steady temperature, and says the ASHP works well – although in the coldest weather, he supplements with additional heat from his log burner. He is writing up his experience, to put on our website, as there's great uncertainty among the public as to where ASHPs are suitable/reliable.

Solid-wall older homes are difficult: Many homes in Kinver date from Victorian or Edwardian times, including many terraced homes built as workers cottages. These homes are difficult to insulate – we recommend loft insulation and draught proofing where required. However solid wall insulation is expensive and tricky. Externally, it could change frontages in a way which would be unacceptable to planners, since the buildings form an attractive street scene. Internally, there's very little space to play with. We are still exploring practical options for wall insulation. Despite the description of available grants such as GBIS, these homes never seem to qualify. We continue to explore practical options.



Get your **FREE** 'Home Energy MOT' with free energy saving products and money-saving advice

Our Thermal Camera spots the cold spots

SCAN ME

www.KinverClimate.co.uk

To book or find out more, scan the QR code or email info@KinverClimate.co.uk ... or just call us on 07354 077381

KINVER CLIMATE ACTION GROUP
COMMUNITY HOME SOLUTIONS
ENERGY



About our **FREE** 'Home Energy MOT'

What is the Home Energy MOT?

We help you work out how you could save money on your energy bills, and make your home more comfortable, from simple, cheap fixes to bigger actions. We use our thermal camera to show up the cold spots where heat is escaping. We can also provide free LED bulbs, draught excluder, radiator foil and other handy kit.

If you would like help with small jobs such as draughtproofing, we can arrange that, free of charge. And we can put you in touch with advice on the grants available, eg on health or income grounds.

SCAN ME

www.KinverClimate.co.uk

Who provides the Home Energy MOT?

We are the Kinver Climate Action Group, a community organisation. We have a grant from South Staffordshire Council to support this service. We are working with Community Home Solutions who are responsible locally for rolling out grants to homeowners for energy efficiency improvements. Retrofit experts Energy Efficiency Consultants provide training and technical support.

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