

“Our emerging energy challenges are best addressed through collaborative community initiatives...”

THE WARM-UP

William Bradley
Peter Smith

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The age of cheap energy is over. The only question now is, will the extra rent from dearer energy go to an ever smaller circle of producers, or will it be directed back into the domestic economies of the consumers, with the added benefits of increased environmental sustainability?

Nobuo Tanaka, Executive Director of
the International Energy Agency

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William Bradley
Peter Smith
January 2011

Executive summary

The UK's housing stock is ageing, thermally inefficient and in some instances hazardous. Dramatic levels of capital investment will be needed to improve these deficiencies to support efforts to eradicate fuel poverty and significantly reduce our residential energy demand and carbon emissions. Emissions from the domestic housing sector account for just under a third of the UK's total carbon emissions, and therefore reducing this level is an important element in the strategy to meet our legally binding emissions reduction target. At the same time, fuel-poor households generally consume less energy than more affluent households and at the same time occupy energy inefficient homes. Consequently, and inevitably, higher energy prices have a disproportionate impact on the poorest households and the vulnerable, who are also constrained by their limited access to the competitive energy market. How the UK adapts to these challenges and introduces suitably ambitious and effective policies will play a key role in protecting households from inevitable energy price increases.

The Energy Act 2011 made provisions for the development of a Green Deal and a new energy company obligation to replace the existing Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), which will both expire in 2012. The UK Government has recently stated:

The development of the Green Deal and ECO [energy company obligation] reflects the urgent need for a step-change in our approach to energy efficiency in existing domestic and non-domestic buildings. This will be critical to meeting our carbon emissions and fuel poverty targets.¹

While it is clear that a step-change in the approach and scale is needed, it is equally important to appreciate the merit, or

lessons that can be drawn, of investigating the effectiveness of existing programmes. Demos and National Energy Action (NEA), supported by British Gas, set out to investigate the advantage of a policy that aims to improve the energy efficiency of ‘hard to treat’ homes – those that cannot accommodate standard energy efficiency measures – such as homes with solid walls or no loft space – in areas of low income. The report presents the findings of a programme of research carried out into two CESP schemes – the Rivers Estate in Blakenall, Walsall, and the Highfields Estate in Stafford.

CESP was launched in September 2009. It is funded by large energy suppliers and generators, through an obligation placed on them to meet a carbon emissions reduction target through the installation of carbon abatement measures in the domestic sector. The programme attempts to increase warmth and reduce household fuel bills and carbon emissions through a ‘whole house’ approach to energy efficiency, which is delivered via a street-by-street, community-wide approach. Measures are delivered through the establishment of community-based partnerships between local authorities, housing associations, community groups and energy companies. The scheme was designed in this way to make use of the innovative nature of community-based organisations, with their long-standing ability to engage with their own community, a process that energy companies find difficult to perform on their own.

While the investigation did attempt to establish the extent to which CESP policy increases warmth, and reduces household fuel bills and carbon emissions, the main subject under investigation was whether this activity has also prompted the accrual of a wider set of benefits associated with area-based interventions, many of which enhance a sense of pride and confidence within the community. By understanding these effects it is possible to identify opportunities for future energy efficiency schemes to be designed and implemented, through effective local partnerships, to maximise the potential social, economic and environmental regeneration outcomes that a street-by-street approach to household energy efficiency can offer. These objectives also complement the social, economic and

environmental gains that can be achieved by addressing fuel poverty more generally.

Research methodology

In Walsall, we coordinated and held a focus group – at the local village centre in the heart of the Blakenall community – with local residents who had received energy efficiency measures through the CESP scheme and key delivery partners. Afterwards we contacted stakeholders to ask them what their perception of the day had been. In Stafford, we used a household questionnaire to survey over 400 households which had received energy efficiency measures as part of the CESP scheme, and received 35 responses. We took a multiple meeting and interview approach to gain feedback from the delivery partners. This involved a meeting with representatives from the housing association, Stafford and Rural Homes (SaRH), followed by an open meeting including representatives from SaRH, Stafford Borough Council, SERS (the external wall insulation contractor) and Rockwool (the internal insulation contractor). Following the establishment of the preliminary findings, we held a roundtable event with energy experts, non-governmental organisations, consumer groups, the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) and Ofgem to explore the issues that emerged and consider their relevance to emerging energy policies.

Research findings

Our investigation showed that the residents who received energy efficiency measures in Walsall and Stafford were largely satisfied with the delivery of the schemes and the final outcomes. Furthermore, there is evidence that homes are now warmer and cheaper to heat. Both schemes could therefore broadly be considered a success. However, the challenge to deliver on the basics of the scheme (let alone enhance a sense of pride and confidence within the community) should not be underestimated. Measures to remedy poor heating or improve energy efficiency in hard to treat dwellings are usually more

expensive to apply, and supply chains for some technologies are less well developed. In addition, because of the hard to treat nature of the housing interventions, these measures often need to be bespoke and households can be reluctant to accept measures that may be disruptive. This gave rise to a number of important issues and varied degrees of success in the development and delivery process of both projects.

Our research identified the limited success of the ‘street-by-street’ approach, which CESP aims to deliver. While the uptake by the private rented sector was better in Walsall than in Stafford, across both schemes, the visual impact of some houses not receiving the measures was widely considered a disappointment. A wider uptake was achieved in Walsall through a better-planned financial offer to the private residents. It became clear that ensuring a tenant liaison officer is in place for the duration of the work is hugely important in managing the day-to-day issues that emerge. In Walsall, the tenant liaison officer was able to resolve problems quickly, whereas in Stafford, the lack of a tenant liaison officer meant that issues were not dealt with effectively, with many persisting beyond the completion of the project.

The measured implementation of the Walsall scheme and the effective partnerships that were developed between the housing association and contractors led to a scheme that was delivered to expectations, but also allowed for wider engagement with the local school and local employment opportunities. However, in Stafford, problems with delivery – particularly the dividing of responsibility between multiple stakeholders – led to delays and a rush to finish the work, resulting in a number of missed opportunities. These included patchy coverage across the estate, a failure to pursue the employment potential of the work and a lack of engagement with local schools. These issues were sighted and investigated further from the perspective of the householders and delivery partners. The implications of these observations were subsequently considered, not only to establish how future schemes can be improved to aid the delivery of energy efficiency measures to households but also from a wider perspective, in delivering added benefits to the community.

From our research, we have drawn a number of key conclusions with regard to delivering area-based energy efficiency schemes successfully:

- Investing time in exploring ownership over discrete areas of the project delivery, actions and relationships is a key area of project management and mutually reinforcing partnerships.
- The level of prescription within the CESP policy has delivered improvements in deprived areas and while these outcomes must be applauded, the lack of flexibility to allow the scheme to be extended to areas directly outside the eligible area undoubtedly led to missed opportunities and prevented the benefits of the schemes from being delivered on a wider scale.
- Community-wide energy efficiency schemes get people talking about their area and experience of the scheme. The attitudes towards the scheme displayed in these interactions can be positive or negative, but generally these discussions strengthen community bonds, develop social capital and may prompt further community discussion.
- Community-wide energy efficiency schemes can provide added impetus for existing community groups (or individuals) and enhance confidence about taking further action to improve the local area.

The conclusion to the report can be put simply and at heart there is a straightforward message: the ‘how’ is just as important as the ‘what’ when it comes to CESP. A sense of ownership regarding the delivery of the scheme is central to householder perceptions of whether the scheme is being carried out in their interests or is simply being imposed on them. Based on our findings and conclusions, we have identified a range of ways in which to ensure ‘the basics’ of delivering warmer homes are achieved:

- High profile engagement captures residents’ attention and spreads awareness of the scheme, but there is also a need to reinforce this with door-to-door marketing and advice provision by a known and trusted agent.

- The owner-occupier offer and the responsibility for this group must be established and communicated at the beginning of the project. This will aid the take-up of the scheme across tenure but is also a key element in enhancing community cohesion and achieving a harmonised streetscape.
- Energy efficiency interventions in hard to treat properties are often disruptive. It is critical this is explained to householders before the work starts. Householders are often prepared to put up with disruption if they are aware of how long it will last and understand that any estimates of the completion date might change.
- During the delivery phase it is important that a trusted local agent is used as a point of liaison and can manage the relationship between the client (householder), main contractor and sub-contractor. This agent is more likely to be alert to (and have a sense of responsibility for) issues that seemed relatively minor, which if not addressed could end up undermining many of the benefits the scheme may bring.
- It is critical to provide comprehensive and universal advice, not only to ensure the householder gets the most out of the measures installed, but also to underline the benefits the scheme has brought. If householders are confident that they have been given the opportunity to ask questions and learn how to optimise the use of the measures installed, confidence in the programme is greatly increased. If this learning is shared within the community, there is no doubt that it enhances the community impact.
- Before and after evaluation of project management and householder experience is critical for driving further improvements in the delivery and cost effectiveness of the scheme.

Our research has demonstrated that area-based energy efficiency schemes such as CESP, when delivered well, can deliver a range of economic, social and environmental outcomes to residents and the wider community in which they live. We have developed a series of best practice recommendations to enable future schemes to maximise the opportunities to deliver these wider benefits:

- Where possible, schemes should be aligned with relevant funding streams and initiatives tackling local unemployment to ensure that the installation process generates opportunities for local jobs and skills development.
- Local authorities and housing associations should look to CESP and similar schemes as a potential opportunity for generating community pride and a shared community experience of regeneration, which improves community networks.
- Future schemes would benefit from the input of urban design guidance at the project outset, in order to maximise the potential aesthetic benefits in improving the quality of place. This will in turn amplify the wider social and environmental benefits of an area-based retrofitting scheme.

To ensure that households and communities are fully equipped to reduce their environmental impact, they must be equipped with the right tools and the right information. Energy efficiency measures can provide the tools, but backing this up with clear instructions about using the measures, and information on additional ways to greener living, are critical.

- Home energy advice packages – where residents are shown how to use their new installations to maximise the energy saving – are an important tool in achieving the above.
- Opportunities to develop links with local schools and colleges in order to educate and raise awareness of environmental issues should be considered a crucial aspect of area-based schemes, educating the next generation of householders in living more sustainable lifestyles.
- CESP and other schemes should be seen as teaching tools and a spur to behavioural change, but this can only be achieved if the home improvements are provided in a wider context of whole-house and whole-street delivery.

1 Introduction

Tackling climate change is arguably the most pressing issue facing our society today. In recognition of this, the UK Government is committed to reducing the UK's carbon emissions by at least 80 per cent by 2050. Given the uncertainty over the ability to decarbonise power generation, reducing emissions from the domestic housing sector, which account for just under a third of the UK's total carbon emissions, is an important element in the strategy to meet this target. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fourth assessment, in line with a range of other major studies, argues that energy efficiency is one of the key devices in combating climate change in the short to medium term.²

At the same time, the most recent statistics show that more than one in five UK households suffered from fuel poverty in 2009.³ This represents around 5.5 million households and 1 million more than in 2008, an eye-watering rise of 22 per cent.⁴ This rise is primarily the result of rising fuel bills: between 2004 and 2009, electricity prices rose by more than 75 per cent. Gas prices over the same period rose by more than 122 per cent.⁵ While fuel poverty results from a combination of factors, including low household income and high energy prices, household energy efficiency is also an important contributing factor. Fuel-poor households generally consume less energy than more affluent households and at the same time occupy energy inefficient homes. Consequently, and inevitably, higher energy prices have a disproportionate impact on the poorest households and the vulnerable, who are also constrained by their limited access to the competitive energy market. Improving the energy efficiency of fuel-poor households can reduce fuel bills, and in some instances lift households out of fuel poverty altogether.

Reducing household energy consumption also contributes to a reduction in carbon emissions across the domestic sector.

In recognition of the importance of household energy efficiency and its role in alleviating fuel poverty, the Labour Government launched the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) in September 2009. CESP is funded by large energy suppliers and generators, through an obligation placed on them to meet a carbon emissions reduction target by installing carbon abatement measures in the domestic sector. It aims to improve the energy efficiency of ‘hard to treat’ homes – those that cannot accommodate standard energy efficiency measures, such as homes with solid walls or no loft space – in areas of low income. This adds increased warmth and reduces household fuel bills and carbon emissions through a ‘whole house’ approach to energy efficiency: a package of measures tailored to suit each household.⁶

Through targeting the most disadvantaged communities and households in the country, who live in some of the hardest to treat homes, the scheme is also an important contributor to the Government’s social and regeneration policies – an issue we discuss in chapter 4.⁷

The CESP impact assessment recognised a range of barriers to the uptake of energy efficiency measures that often exist in low-income areas, including lack of capital, opposing incentives for landlords and tenants, and hidden costs.⁸ Delivered through partnerships primarily between local authorities, housing associations and energy companies, measures are delivered at no cost to those in the social housing sector and at low cost, through the use of innovative financial offerings, to owner-occupiers. As well as the innovative whole-house approach, CESP was also designed to take a community-based approach, through intensive action in targeted areas to install measures in as many homes as possible: ‘Delivering multiple measures to groups of homes should improve efficiency and lower costs. It can also help build a sense of community action.’⁹

The first live CESP scheme was launched in Walsall by British Gas in January 2010. By June 2011, there were more than 150 live schemes across the country.¹⁰ Anecdotal evidence from

those involved in delivering these schemes has pointed not only to the success of the energy efficiency measures, evident in warmer homes and reduced fuel bills, but also the transformational effects on the local environment and social impact on the community. The effect of the solid wall insulation on the external appearance of the renovated properties is also assumed to have a community-wide effect, above and beyond the impact on individual households.

Some CESP schemes have been developed as part of wider neighbourhood regeneration initiatives. Sustainable Blacon, part of the Blacon Community Trust, has ten years' experience working with local people and organisations to regenerate their local area, a suburb of Cheshire. Sustainable Blacon has a board including energy advisors, urban designers and representatives from the local council and housing association. The organisation has worked with British Gas and Chester and District Housing Trust on a CESP project, helping promote the scheme to local residents, as a trusted organisation on the ground.¹¹ The success of the CESP scheme, together with green space improvements, the promotion of sustainable transport initiatives and fostering of social enterprise, has been recognised, with the area being chosen for the Government's Low Carbon Communities Challenge.

CESP schemes are becoming increasingly ambitious in their potential to align with regeneration activities and deliver benefits over and above energy efficiency improvements. The proposed Dallfield Community Energy Saving Programme, a £5 million scheme to improve energy efficiency of four blocks of flats in Dundee, is a good example of this.¹² External insulation and new district heating systems are being installed to provide affordable warmth, but flats are also receiving new kitchens and bathrooms, thus benefiting above and beyond reduced energy bills. The Council is also using the scheme as a means of tackling anti-social behaviour in the area by working closely with tenant groups, the police and caretakers to help prevent nuisance and restore confidence in the estate. It is hoped that solar PV panels will be installed at the local primary school, providing a useful educational tool through the development of new teaching

resources, on top of reducing the schools' fuel bills by up to 20 per cent.¹³ In order to ensure a community legacy for the project, Scottish Gas is providing a community 'pot' of £40,000 to be allocated for the community, by the community, based on proposals developed with the residents group and housing officers.

This report presents the findings of a joint programme of research carried out by Demos and National Energy Action (NEA) into two CESP schemes – the Rivers Estate in Blakenall, Walsall, and the Highfields Estate in Stafford – in order to better understand the effects that the scheme can have, over and above providing affordable warmth and saving carbon emissions, in building a more environmentally, socially and financially sustainable community. The research has also sought to identify the ways in which future CESP schemes can be designed and implemented through effective local partnerships, to maximise the potential outcomes in social, economic and environmental regeneration that a street-by-street approach to household energy efficiency can offer. These objectives also complement the social, economic and environmental gains that can be achieved by addressing fuel poverty more generally.

Area-based interventions – a more effective approach to energy efficiency?

The value of locally implemented energy saving programmes of all types – not just CESP – in delivering a range of benefits (other than reduced fuel bills and carbon reduction) is increasingly being recognised. The UK Green Building Council has noted how: 'conceiving and delivering infrastructure at a neighbourhood scale as an integrated package represents a very significant opportunity to deliver environmental, social and economic objectives'.¹⁴ CABE has argued that neighbourhood approaches to tackling climate change can create jobs and improve the quality of place.¹⁵

In 2009, the Energy Saving Trust sought to define an area-based approach to energy efficiency as one that 'delivers energy efficiency measures in a spatial area – which could be a street, a neighbourhood, a Local Authority or a group of Local Authority

areas'.¹⁶ This approach has been developed in contrast to traditional approaches to tackling fuel poverty and improving energy efficiency. Warm Front, which takes a traditional approach, provides heating and insulation improvements to private sector households on certain income-related benefits. While this scheme has been effective in targeting the most vulnerable individuals, those that do not qualify for income-related benefits or may not be aware or put off from applying for them do not benefit from the programme. By bringing support to householders' doorsteps, area-based schemes are often more effective at identifying need and ensuring householders receive support.

The area-based approach has also been widely recognised as a cost-effective method, exploiting economies of scale, for increasing energy efficiency and achieving significant carbon savings. The Cardiff Partnering Scheme, for example, a retrofit of 100 homes and five blocks of flats, reduced costs by 20 per cent through targeting a whole area, rather than upgrading homes individually.¹⁷

NEA has advocated reform of the delivery of domestic heating and insulation retrofit programmes from centralised supplier-led delivery models, towards a systematic bottom-up, area-based or 'zonal' roll-out of energy efficiency (demand and supply side) measures, which would be led by local authorities and their partners. NEA's proposal for a national energy efficiency scheme is designed to be delivered by local authorities and their partners and builds on the success of the Warm Zones programme,¹⁸ which pioneered the area-based approach to tackling fuel poverty at the local level. Their report, *Rebuilding for Britain's Energy Future*,¹⁹ argues for a framework that intends to merge and tackle environmental and social imperatives together by exploiting the correlation between energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

Wider impacts

Area-based approaches have been advocated for not only their cost-effective delivery towards helping individuals and communities become more energy efficient, but also their

additional benefits, including local job creation and improvements to health.²⁰ The Sustainable Development Commission's *The Future is Local* built on growing recognition of an area-based approach, advocating an 'integrated, area-based approach to retrofitting buildings and upgrading community infrastructure', arguing that enabling communities to renew their own neighbourhoods, in partnership with local government and enterprise, can deliver benefits over and above reducing fuel bills and carbon emissions.²¹ If the right approach is taken to reducing the carbon emissions of our building stock, the report argues, the impact of a renewed 'place' can have a significant impact on how sustainably people live their lives.²² This report developed a framework of potential outcomes relating to the sustainability of particular neighbourhoods and communities that may result from improvements made to local infrastructure, with outcomes categorised under four key headings:

- living within environmental limits; for example, through reduced carbon emissions and improved resilience to the impacts of climate change
- achieving a sustainable economy; for example, through lower running costs and a reduction in fuel poverty, support for local employment and new income streams for reinvestment by the community
- promoting good governance; for example, by giving encouragement and support for local leadership in delivering sustainability
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; for example, through a better quality of place and improved community cohesion, interaction and civic pride²³

There is evidence that area-based, locally delivered carbon reduction and energy efficiency schemes can have a transformative effect on behaviours related to sustainable living. The community regeneration project in Stock and Buckland, Devon, shows how helping households improve their energy efficiency can act as a springboard for wider behavioural change.

The project, which received funding from the Energy Savings Trust's Innovative Carbon Reduction Pilot Scheme, targeted households, schools and businesses to reduce their fuel bills but also provide the community with the 'knowledge, skills and systems it needs to continue progress beyond the lifetime of the project'.²⁴ Through engaging simultaneously with different sections of the community, the project looked to create a community-wide movement, rather than just an individual household improvement in energy efficiency with a sense of momentum and reciprocity among the community.

Key to the success of this project was engagement with the local school. Those running the project visited schools and provided training to staff and students in how to conduct basic energy monitoring and decision making about how to reduce energy usage. The project also engaged local businesses, training 'environment champions', with workshops providing information on how to improve energy, waste and water efficiency, and how to cut costs, with the hope of enabling the champions to implement change in their organisation.²⁵

There is also good evidence that area-based approaches to tackling fuel poverty can have an impact on a greater proportion of a particular area when compared with schemes that might target individual households on the basis of income or age. The Girvan Community Energy project was an area-based scheme to provide affordable warmth to a deprived town in Ayrshire, Scotland, where 40 per cent of households were fuel poor. It provided free insulation for over 1,000 suitable houses, leading to an estimated annual fuel saving of around £240 per household and an annual reduction in energy consumption of 5.9MWh. This represents an average 20 per cent increase in efficiency.²⁶ Estimates suggest that the insulation has resulted in the community producing 1,227 less tonnes of CO₂ each year. The project also reduced fuel poverty in the community by 20 per cent.²⁷

However, from an area-based perspective, the project was an even greater success. Just under half of those households in fuel poverty before receiving the measures were not receiving benefits and were not over 70, and therefore would not have

received help from a standard scheme,²⁸ highlighting the significant advantage of this community-wide approach to tackling fuel poverty over those using benefits eligibility or other proxies to target households. The evaluation of the project concluded: ‘a fifth of the households receiving insulation have been lifted out of fuel poverty. Had this project only supported priority households, 57 per cent of households that this project lifted out of fuel poverty would still be in fuel poverty.’²⁹

The £30 million refurbishment of the Daneville estate in Liverpool is another good example of the transformative effects that a programme to reduce carbon emissions across a whole community can have, dramatically improving the quality of place through the delivery of environmental, but also social and economic benefits.³⁰ The estate, previously earmarked for demolition, received external wall cladding (improving thermal efficiency and also reducing noise pollution), re-roofing, internal insulation, new windows and doors, boilers, toilet systems, and kitchens and bathrooms.³¹ Alongside the carbon saving, the refurbishment sought to improve security and wellbeing among residents, reduce fuel poverty and eliminate the blight of the vacant flats on the estate. Carbon savings have been estimated at 3,500 tonnes per year, equivalent to a reduction of 70 per cent per household. Fuel bills have been reduced by around £600 per property per annum and 300 jobs were created in the area with local firms of contractors and suppliers.³² The result was a more sustainable community with dramatically increased civic pride.

The potential for job creation in area-based schemes can provide a critical boost to the local economy of deprived areas. The Kirklees Warm Zone scheme, for example, offered free insulation to every suitable property, assessing over 130,000 homes and delivering energy efficiency measures to over 50,000 homes. However it is the 126 jobs created directly by the scheme, and the creation of a new local depot and training depot by a leading energy conservation installation firm, which earned Kirklees recognition more widely, leading to an Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy.

These examples demonstrate the advantages of taking an area-based approach to energy efficiency: the successful delivery of affordable warmth to a wider section of a community, and the potential of these schemes to deliver wider benefits, which can help build more sustainable communities.

Background to the Community Energy Saving Programme

The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP) is an example of the recognition of the benefits of partnership working in an area-based approach. The Electricity and Gas (Community Energy Saving Programme) Order 2009 requires energy suppliers and electricity generators to comply with an overall carbon emissions reduction target of 19.25 million tonnes of CO₂, a target that must be reached by December 2012. Emissions reductions are made through energy efficiency improvements to households across the country in areas of low income, therefore also resulting in alleviating fuel poverty through reduced fuel bills.³³ In this way, CESP also contributes to the Government's Fuel Poverty Strategy.

There are 4,500 neighbourhoods, or Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs),³⁴ based on the Income Domain of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) England, Scotland and Wales, eligible for CESP. In England, this corresponds to the most deprived 10 per cent of areas according to the IMD, and in Scotland and Wales, the lowest 15 per cent.³⁵ The programme is funded by large energy generators and suppliers,³⁶ who are obliged to meet a carbon reduction target through the delivery of carbon abatement measures to households in areas of low income, as defined by the IMD.³⁷ Each company has its own target, measured in metric tonnes (MT) of CO₂.

As previously noted, CESP promotes a whole-house approach to energy efficiency and incentivises providers to deliver a range of measures relevant to each house.³⁸ Measures are delivered through the establishment of community-based partnerships between local authorities, housing associations, community groups and energy companies.³⁹ The scheme was

designed in this way to make use of the innovative nature of community-based organisations, with their long-standing interest in carbon reduction and ability to engage with a wide section of the community, a process that energy companies would find tricky.⁴⁰ As DECC noted in its consultation document:

Through intensive action in targeted areas CESP aims to bring help to as many homes as possible within the context of a community-based approach. The Government believes this is appropriate since homes in close proximity, such as those in a Victorian terraced street, are likely to be physically similar and therefore require similar measures. This kind of 'intensive action', delivering multiple measures to groups of homes, should improve efficiency and lower costs. It can also help build a sense of community action.⁴¹

Ofgem's latest CESP update, with figures until June 2011, reports that 201 schemes have been proposed. Should all proposed schemes be delivered, this would equate to around half of the required total emissions savings of the scheme.⁴² Of those schemes that have been delivered, over 26,000 energy-saving measures have been installed in just under 13,000 homes. Combined, these measures have delivered a 1.4 MT CO₂ (lifetime, including adjustments) emissions reduction, equivalent to 7.2 per cent of the 19.25 MT CO₂ target.⁴³ Most of these savings have been delivered through insulation (59.5 per cent) with just over a third coming from new heating systems (36.7 per cent). Only 2.9 per cent of carbon savings have been delivered through microgeneration, and less than 1 per cent through district heating.⁴⁴

Ofgem's latest annual report, covering the year to 31 December 2010, also noted a number of problems with the schemes. These include boundary problems stemming from the designation of specific eligible LSOAs and the high proportion of hard to treat properties requiring bespoke solutions.⁴⁵ Ofgem points out that the delivery of CESP is more complex than other similar supplier obligations, such as the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target), resulting in delays in forming local partnerships and getting schemes from the planning to implementation stage.⁴⁶

While it is clear that many CESP schemes are now delivered in a region with some of the most deprived areas of the country and challenging environments to implement energy efficiency cost effectively, at scale, within the original consultation for the scheme, a number of organisations voiced concern about the potential bias of CESP towards urban areas, to the detriment of rural areas, where households are also at great risk of being in fuel poverty. For example, in 2006, 21 per cent of households in rural areas were in fuel poverty, compared with only 11 per cent and 10 per cent of households in suburban and urban areas respectively.⁴⁷ The Energy Savings Trust argued that, ‘using the income element of the Index of Multiple Deprivation to determine eligibility in effect excludes rural areas from benefiting from CESP due to the lower density and greater mix of rural populations’.⁴⁸ Despite offering regional analysis of the distribution of CESP schemes across the country,⁴⁹ there is currently no information provided by Ofgem on the delivery of CESP in rural areas.

2 CESP case studies

Introduction to the two case study areas

Stafford and Walsall are located in the West Midlands, a region of great contrasts, with the densely populated urban conurbation of Birmingham sitting alongside the remote and rural areas within Herefordshire and Shropshire.⁵⁰ There are sharp disparities in levels of economic prosperity, with parts of Birmingham and Coventry containing some of the most deprived areas in the UK, but also more prosperous areas, including Solihull and the Vale of Evesham. The economy has historically been underpinned by a strong manufacturing base (for example Cadbury and Rover), but in recent decades there has been a decline in the proportion of the workforce employed in these industries. Between 1996 and 2010, this proportion declined from 22 per cent to 11 per cent.⁵¹ Unemployment in the region at the end of 2010 was the second highest in the UK, at 9.8 per cent, compared with the national average of 7.9 per cent.⁵² The West Midlands has the highest prevalence of fuel poverty in England, with 22 per cent of households classified as fuel poor in the three years to 2009.⁵³

The poor standards of energy efficiency across tenure and housing stock in the West Midlands, where there are above average levels of ‘hard to treat housing’,⁵⁴ is a major contribution to social deprivation. These issues present a number of challenges:

- Measures to remedy poor heating or energy efficiency in hard to treat dwellings are usually more expensive to apply, and supply chains for some technologies are less well developed.
- Because of the hard to treat nature of the housing, interventions often need to be bespoke and households can be reluctant to accept measures that may be disruptive.

- Servicing low income and vulnerable households in such communities requires action across a range of actors and agencies (local authorities, social housing providers, tenant management organisations, large private landlords and individual private or social tenants), all of whom have varying degrees of experience, motivation and financial resources at their disposal.
- While existing energy efficiency policies could have been applied to tackle some of these issues (individual properties would and have benefited under either Warm Front or the Carbon Emission Reduction Target), the scale of intervention required a policy that rewarded a collective or holistic approach.

CESP was conceived as a bespoke policy to address these multiple problems, with individual programmes of intervention taking place within geographical areas. Previous work conducted by National Energy Action (NEA) has highlighted that the West Midlands region was ranked third for the number of Lower Super Output Areas in the bottom 10 per cent decile, with 32 per cent of properties, on average, with solid (and more difficult to insulate) walls.⁵⁵ The West Midlands Regional Energy Strategy highlighted in 2004 that the average Standard Assessment Procedure energy rating for the West Midlands was 48.8, slightly lower than the average for England of 50.6.⁵⁶ Social housing in the West Midlands had an average rating of 52.2, which was the lowest of all English regions.

These statistics show that our two case studies of CESP schemes were delivered in a region with some of the most deprived areas of the country and challenging environments to implement energy efficiency cost effectively, at scale. It is welcome that the CESP programme was able to serve the needs of two communities within the West Midlands and help overcome the challenges discussed above.

Methodology

The project team was tasked with investigating CESP activity in these areas (the Highfields Estate in Stafford and the Rivers

Estate in Blakenall, Walsall) in order to ascertain whether the programme had delivered on its primary objective to reduce carbon emissions and improve the efficiency of the housing stock, but also to discover whether this activity had also prompted the accrual of a wider set of benefits associated with area-based interventions (as outlined above), many of which enhance a sense of pride and confidence within the community.

Careful consideration was given to designing the most appropriate methodological approach for this research. From the outset, it was agreed that Demos and NEA would collaborate jointly in the design and roll out of the project. Particular consideration was given to highlight the impartial role Demos and NEA were playing to maximise the level of qualitative feedback from householders and stakeholders involved in CESP delivery across Walsall and Stafford. In Walsall, NEA and Demos coordinated and delivered a focus group on the afternoon of 29 July, which was held at the local village centre set in the heart of the Blakenall community. Twenty-eight residents from social and private owner-occupier housing attended along with community and delivery stakeholders including:

- Walsall Council
- Walsall Housing Group
- Walsall New Deal for Communities
- Rockwool
- SERS Ltd
- Worcester Bosch

The focus group in Walsall included three detailed discussion groups, two led by NEA and one by Demos. A plenary was held at the end in order to feed back key topics from the discussion groups. To ensure feedback was captured as accurately and comprehensively, the focus groups were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. In addition, stakeholders were contacted following the event to capture their perception of the day.

Following the success of the approach adopted in Walsall, Demos and NEA suggested to representatives in Stafford that a

similar approach be adopted in Walsall. Following discussions, Stafford and Rural Housing Group (SaRH) was unable to give consent to allow the research team to contact householders to attend a focus group. A questionnaire was agreed on as a suitable compromise. In an effort to maximise the response rate to the questionnaire a prize draw was used, with a first prize of £100 worth of shopping vouchers, second prize of £50 worth of shopping vouchers and 20 third prizes of an energy monitor. The project team sent 400 households a postal questionnaire, and NEA received 35 valid responses. The information collated has since been analysed and incorporated into the findings section of this report.

The approach to gain feedback from delivery partners (stakeholders) required revision following the revised engagement strategy in Stafford. Demos and NEA opted for a multiple meeting and interview approach: the team held a meeting with representatives from SaRH, followed by an open meeting including representatives from SaRH, Stafford Borough Council, SERS (the external wall insulation contractor) and Rockwool (the internal insulation contractor). Both meetings were audio-recorded and the transcripts used in the findings section of this report.

Following the meeting with SaRH and stakeholders involved in the delivery of CESP, NEA contacted a representative from British Gas to gain feedback in response to some of the issues raised by SaRH. Demos also met two members of the Highfields Estate Residents and Tenants Association for a Good Environment (HERaTAGE) community group, to discuss the ways in which they had been involved in the CESP scheme.

Once the project team had established its preliminary findings, Demos arranged for a roundtable event with energy experts, NGOs, consumer groups, the Department of Energy and Climate Change and Ofgem to explore the issues that emerged, and sought to consider their relevance to emerging energy policies.

3 Research findings

Walsall

Walsall has a long history of heavy industry (such as iron, steel and coal mining) and craft-based industry (such as the leather trade) but the sector has seen a steady decline over recent years.⁵⁷ Walsall is ranked within the bottom 50 most deprived local authorities in England and people living and working in the borough have wages below the national average. Unemployment in the area is high. In March 2011, 6.4 per cent of the working age population were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, a significantly higher proportion than in Stafford and higher than the national average over a comparable period.⁵⁸ Walsall is a highly diverse place, with almost one in six of its population coming from a minority ethnic group, compared with just less than one in ten nationally and one in 20 in Stafford.⁵⁹

Blakenall Ward, in which the River's Estate CESP scheme was delivered, is the most deprived ward in Walsall. According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, the dataset used to establish CESP eligibility) for 2007, half of the areas within the ward were in the most deprived 5 per cent areas of the country. Life expectancy in the ward is around three years lower than the Walsall average of 78.3 years.⁶⁰ The percentage of the population receiving Jobseeker's Allowance in August 2011 was 9.5 per cent, almost three percentage points higher than the Walsall average of 6.8 per cent and more than double the national average of 3.9 per cent.⁶¹ In February 2011, more than a quarter of the population (27.5 per cent) were receiving key out of work benefits (including Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit) just under ten percentage points higher than the Walsall average (17.7 per cent) and more than double the national average (12.3 per cent).⁶²

Affordable warmth in Walsall

Walsall's Affordable Warmth Strategy⁶³ sets out the Council's commitment and framework to provide affordable warmth within vulnerable households by 2010 and all households in the borough by 2016. Within the strategy there is an admission that

*the properties in the most deprived neighbourhoods in Walsall, in the main, lack adequate heating, and residents often suffer the effects of insufficient insulation. This can exacerbate sickness, especially respiratory illness, which results in higher absences from school, lower exam results and, consequently, high unemployment.*⁶⁴

As well as raising the profile of energy awareness among council representatives and partner organisations, and ensuring residents have access to free and impartial energy and financial advice, Walsall Council aims to improve energy efficiency of social housing so that homes are capable of delivering affordable warmth and exceeding the thermal comfort element of the Decent Homes Standard,⁶⁵ and to encourage and assist private sector residents to achieve affordable warmth.

The Government's recommended method for measuring the energy rating of residential buildings is the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP), which is based on a scale of 1 to 120; the higher the number, the better the standard. The average SAP rating for local authority or registered social landlord properties in Walsall is 58.0 and 60.3 respectively. These figures compare with a national average SAP rating of 50.2 in the private rented sector and 49.6 in owner-occupied housing, indicating that the energy rating of Walsall's housing stock is better than the national average.⁶⁶

To support the strategy a private sector house condition survey was produced by David Adamson and Partners in 2003. The survey highlighted that 56,564 private sector dwellings (75.7 per cent) in Walsall meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard and can be regarded as satisfactory. The remaining 18,159 private sector dwellings (24.3 per cent) are 'non-decent' because of their unsatisfactory condition, or inadequate amenity or energy efficiency. The council's own survey of the private sector housing stock found that the average SAP rating in

Walsall was 49, with the majority of dwellings (92 per cent) having a SAP rating between 30 and 70 (at a national level, 79 per cent fall into this range). The percentage of dwellings below a SAP of 20 is estimated at 2 per cent (1,900 dwellings). This is not dissimilar to Stafford, where 3.4 per cent of dwellings have a SAP rating below 30.

Walsall's housing stock

Like many councils, Walsall Council does not own any housing stock. In 2003, two new housing associations were formed to manage the homes sold to them by the Council: Walsall Housing Group (WHG) and WATMOS Housing Co-operative (WATMOS). WHG is one of the largest providers of housing in the West Midlands and owns, manages and maintains 19,000 properties. WATMOS is a charitable housing association, and was established by pooling traditional tenant management organisations across Walsall. Like many tenant management organisations, it is made up of many of the tenants and residents who live there.

The most common type of housing in Walsall is semi-detached houses, making up 39.3 per cent of the housing stock. The least common type of property in this area is detached houses (5.3 per cent of the total housing stock). A high proportion of property in this area is socially rented. A lower than average proportion of property in this area is owner occupied. The latest (2008) Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) statistics available estimate approximately 23 per cent of all households in Walsall are in fuel poverty.

Given the comparably low energy efficiency of the housing stock within the area, the stated aims of the Council, its established and professional housing management structures and the extent of fuel poverty, perhaps it is of no surprise that WHG was the first in the country to benefit from the CESP programme. In December 2009, WHG and British Gas signed a contract to deliver a range of energy saving improvements to approximately 130 homes in and around the Rivers Estate in Blakenall, Walsall. The project was immediately picked up by the

Government; Dame Joan Ruddock MP (at the time minister of state at DECC) saw the project at first hand and praised the scheme, which has subsequently won much acclaim.

As well as being a reference point for many attempting to emulate it, WHG was runner up in the regeneration category of the Chartered Institute for Housing National Awards in 2010. The Demos and NEA team therefore welcomed the opportunity to investigate the merits of the scheme further and explore the wider economic and social impacts that CESP has had on this community.

CESP in Walsall

The CESP project investigated was a partnership between WHG, British Gas, Walsall Council, WALSAVE credit union and charitable organisations. This diverse set of organisations set about coordinating the delivery of external wall insulation or cladding and other measures, including new boilers, to homes. In all, 136 homes owned by the housing group and 152 home owners received a mixture of external wall insulation, heating upgrades, loft insulation, draught proofing and home energy advice visits. There was also an attempt to engage Walsall Health to identify fuel poverty-related health problems.⁶⁷ *In order to engage with residents on their experience of this process, the project team held a stakeholder event in Blakenall Village Centre attended by private and social residents who had energy saving measures installed, as well as relevant agencies and a number of delivery partners.*

Findings from the Walsall case study

Becoming aware of the scheme: Reinforcing the message, managing aspiration and the importance of clarity in the offering

The joint WHG and British Gas Walsall Open Day was held in February 2010 and was well attended by just under half of all local residents. Both social and private tenure households were invited to the event. The event provided householders with an overview of the measures that were going to be installed. Through our focus group discussions with householders, it was

noted that the British Gas open day was informative and gave many the chance to ask questions about the CESP programme and to flag issues pertinent to them. Some of the householders we spoke to at the NEA and Demos workshop were aware of the open day yet others were not – out of nine participants in one of the project focus groups, only four stated they were aware of the open day.

Some residents were aware the scheme was considered to be trailblazing and the project had been promoted by engaging with the local MP. Householders recalled how photographs were taken with the local MP and the then minister, Dame Joan Ruddock, which appeared in the local free paper. This enhanced the profile of the project and reinforced a range of other communications, which had been directed at householders. Such enthusiasm for work being carried out in their area and the high level of endorsement clearly captured residents' attention. Two participants' homes were among the first houses to receive energy saving measures, and they received a gift hamper and a bouquet of flowers from British Gas, and a visit from Phil Bentley, the company's managing director. Recalling this experience, one man said, '[The] MD from BG couldn't do enough for you, eh, he was a gentleman.'

While in the initial stages of the launch of an initiative, these types of activity and testimony from householders help spread the word about the scheme, clearly these techniques are not sustainable for the entirety of the project. Nearly all participants at the focus group recalled receiving a letter or branded leaflet through the post; however, many at this point did not believe they would benefit directly from the scheme. Some said they thought, 'I'll believe it when I see it.' Many participants, particularly the social tenants, stated they had discussed the proposals with their neighbours and still remained suspicious about the whole scheme. The target group first heard of the CESP programme from neighbours and was very sceptical initially about getting 'something for nothing' and only changed their perception when they saw the scaffolding being erected in order to start to undertake the work. This was subsequently further reinforced from house visits from WHG.

At the pre-installation stage, there were rumours among neighbours that the whole community would benefit from the programme and that it would include even those private tenants and owner-occupiers not receiving any benefits. A major impetus for this interest was that owner-occupiers saw work being carried out to the properties of neighbours in social housing and then enquired whether this initiative was open to them.

One focus group participant's experience was typical. Having just bought her house and questioned some of the workers on adjacent properties, she was advised to go to the WHG offices to see if she (as an owner-occupier) could receive energy saving measures under the scheme. She had thought this initiative was just for the council tenants, but found the prospect appealing on realising her eligibility. However, at this point it was stated that owner-occupiers would have to contribute substantially to the cost of the measures. Some householders reported they were quoted they would need to make a contribution of £5,000 to the costs of external cladding. Because of the incentive for mixed measures⁶⁸ this figure was later reduced to £3,000 as the householder was also eligible for a replacement boiler.

Following such enquiries, it was agreed that the work would be staggered, beginning with WHG stock and then moving to privately owned homes. British Gas and Walsall Council agreed that British Gas would handle the contact with this group. Thanks to this discussion, a loan facility and grants were also made available so that some owner-occupiers paid nothing upfront. However, it was clear from the project team's discussion with owner occupiers that the initial confusion over the different quotes meant some residents were very negative about the whole scheme and decided not to have any of the work carried out, even if they were aware the final offer made to them would have been attractive.

It is clear that these incidences could have been avoided if the responsibility for owner-occupiers and the offering to them had been defined at the outset. This was reinforced by Walsall Council, which indicated at our stakeholder discussion group that this particular process could have been better coordinated, and information should have been provided during the

marketing phase on the applicability of the scheme for owner occupiers. The confusion surrounding what measures would be available for private households, and at what price, clearly had a negative effect on a number of residents' perceptions of the scheme. The failure to communicate to residents why the installation of different energy saving measures would come at variable costs, often dependent on the number of measures being installed, also led to a reduction in the number of owner-occupiers who benefited from the scheme, since many were put off at an early stage.

Was the installation process positive in Walsall?

As highlighted in chapter 1, measures to remedy poor heating or energy efficiency in hard to treat dwellings are usually more expensive to apply and supply chains for some technologies are less well developed than elsewhere. In addition, because of the hard to treat nature of the housing interventions, these measures often need to be bespoke and households can be reluctant to accept measures that may be disruptive.⁶⁹

The installation of solid wall insulation in particular can be time consuming and costly. A typical installation involves securing planning consent, gaining permission to work on the property where relevant, undertaking a survey of the household, preparation of external space (eg scaffolding), preparation of walls (sanding down old paintwork or uneven surfaces) and then installing the solid wall insulation. After the job is complete, waste materials (such as off-cuts) need to be cleared up and external redecoration (including selection of mutually agreeable paint schemes) needs to take place. The potential for the timetable to slip on any of these elements is also dependent on a wide range of variables. Some of these can be controlled through project management; others cannot.

As a result, regardless of the householders' initial conceptions of the value (or not) of the measures being installed or the worth of the scheme in general, the delivery phase of the project is a critical factor. Failure to explain the process fully, and to address initial concerns, questions or unwarranted delays can risk souring attitudes towards the initiative and negatively affect

the value other householders might place on the scheme. Getting this phase right is therefore key to unlocking any wider benefits that may accrue as a result of community approaches to energy efficiency.

During our stakeholder workshop, participants described how the installation appointments were made. The process was for the householder to be contacted by letter with the dates and time that the work was due to be carried out. Some householders also benefited from a door-to-door call from either WHG or British Gas to say the installers would be in their street on a certain day, and would be in contact to start their work in the coming days. These appointments were once again often confirmed by letter. Many householders told us that at some stage during the work being carried out they had to arrange time off from work and organise child care. Despite these inconveniences, householders commented that in the main these arrangements were suitably flexible and rearranging appointments was not a problem.

The installation period

Householders from the three discussion groups held during the focus group stated that boiler replacement work was completed to time and the installer teams were friendly and professional. Several commented that when the work was completed, the heating engineers helped put all of the furniture back and made provision for early morning slots. One householder commented, 'He came when he said he would be, at 7am.' Others reported that work was done very quickly. Most households had heating measures installed within one to two days. In addition, some provision was made to customise the level of support that householders received. For example, some participants had extra help in replacing rotten skirting boards during the works. One stakeholder told the focus group that a lot of effort and management was put in place to ensure the removal and replacement of boilers could be performed in one day. We also heard how, in order to achieve this timescale, installers worked in teams of two, typically arriving early in the morning (7–8am) and ensuring they were gone by 5pm.

As one would expect, external wall installations took longer because of the nature of the work. The majority of householders understood the reason why these energy saving measures were completed more slowly than others, as had been explained to householders by WHG and the contractor. There were some frustrations, however. While many were sympathetic to the time spent to complete solid wall work in general, residents noted that there was a lack of communication about the start and finish times of specific components of the work. This meant some households were left with work half finished as different contractors were needed to finish different parts of the job (installing insulation, waiting for painters and so on). Those waiting for multiple measures also expressed concern around the waiting time in between measures. For example, two sets of social tenants were unhappy about the length of time scaffolding was in place. One had their scaffolding up for six weeks, another for eight weeks. One tenant stated some of the work was delayed for two main reasons: the weather (during January and February external temperatures were below the 3–4°C required in order to apply the finish) and difficulty in sourcing the colour of one of the paints (issues relating to decoration are highlighted later in the report).

Disruptions

What came out of these discussions was that scaffolding is a very visual reminder that work is still being undertaken and prompts discussion among neighbours. Throughout our investigation in Walsall a high percentage of the issues that were highlighted involved scaffolding. Although most householders said the cladding work was completed over a short or 'reasonable' time, they were displeased that scaffolding was left in situ for much longer. Once the work was complete, tenants expected the decoration to be carried out and the scaffolding taken down promptly. Some tenants also complained that despite other houses in their street having had the work completed and scaffolding removed, their scaffolding remained up for a number of weeks. While WHG continued to advise on the reasons for the delay, tenants commented that there seemed to be a disjoint

between what they were told by WHG and the actions of the contractor.

Although participants reported that workers laid special protective plastic sheeting on carpets and created minimum mess and upheaval, some complained about building debris and materials not being cleared away, either while the work was being carried out or after the job was completed. At the workshop some people informed us that those at work during the day found their drives were used for storage and as dumping grounds by the builders. One resident claimed the household couldn't get access to the driveway for weeks while another complained he couldn't use his garage. Some described fences being moved and a front garden being ruined. It was interesting that although these issues seemed relatively minor, they become major talking points for some neighbours when they were not addressed, and risked undermining the benefits that householders were aware would accrue to them as a result of having the work carried out.

It became clear that the disruptive nature of this work required face-to-face interaction with tenants and owner-occupiers in order to ensure expectations were being met. Because contractors were on site these workers were at the front line and exposed to a number of complaints, and were often required to follow up queries, whether or not it was their role to do so. From the householder feedback we received, the vast majority of workers managed these complex interactions well. Queries referred to the workforce were resolved amicably to the satisfaction of the client and the good behaviour, professionalism and punctuality of the workforce was praised. There was evidence from householders that this was important; one elderly woman commented, 'You know when people are coming to your house, you can feel nervous, but installers were friendly and it made us feel relaxed.'

Employment benefits

An important step taken by the project management teams in WHG and British Gas was to utilise and directly employ residents to perform a liaison function. The programme

employed three residents from the estate to undertake this function and a small number to help with low skilled work. Creating work for the local unemployed was perceived by households to be very positive for the local area, giving those residents who were directly employed and other residents a sense of direct involvement in the scheme.

Advocates of community-led regeneration stress the importance of schemes where residents feel that regeneration is being *done by* a community, rather than just *done to* a community. Helping communities to empower themselves, albeit in this case by providing employment to a small number of people, is an important element in building resilience and a more sustainable local economy. Reducing unemployment in the local area is a top priority, and the effects of these employment opportunities – for those involved, but also on the wider perceptions of the success of the scheme – should not be underestimated.

Feedback from tenants

Another key consideration as to whether householders viewed this phase of the project as a success was the quality of the work carried out. As highlighted above, despite the major logistical challenges and disruption, the vast majority of tenants reported to us they were pleased with the end results and that the installation work was of high standard. Issues had arisen about items such as alarm boxes, digital aerials and flower baskets, which had to be re-sited.⁷⁰ One person commented on the use of cheap plastic structures over the bay windows, and another tenant wanted to extend his bay window but was put off by the £800 quote for carrying out the work. The vast majority of these obstacles were overcome to the satisfaction of tenants and owners.

One, perhaps more lasting, concern was that householders have reported that the external insulation can be easily damaged and costly to repair. Cladding requires special breathable paint and should not have heavy items bolted to it without support. One social tenant reported that the workers had spilt some tea on the external cladding, which stained. Instead of being able to clean the stain off with a wire brush, worried it would damage

the cladding, the worker left the tenant with a pot of paint telling her she would be able to patch it up if the stain didn't come off. The residents used the paint and found the shade didn't quite match the original paint, which was disappointing. More generally, following the installation phase, the decoration and proposed colour schemes of the external insulation also created a number of issues.

External decoration

Most participants were happy with the colour their external cladding was painted and some had been given a choice of up to four colours ranging from mustard to grey. Earlier installations had fewer (two or three) colour options. While most were happy with their colour, some had to have the same colour as their neighbour, which caused some debate. Some participants reported that their homes were slightly different shades of the colour used for their neighbour's cladding, because of difficulty sourcing paint, the length of time since painting and weathering.

Choosing the colour of the cladding is an important way of allowing residents to have an element of participation in the scheme, to shape the process of delivery and take some ownership in the final outcome. Evidence suggests that the ability to influence decisions in your local area is also a key factor in determining community cohesion. If a simple step like involving residents in colour choice is got right, it can have an important impact on the wider outcomes of the scheme, individuals and their community as a whole.

Guidance and advice: amplifying the benefits and enhancing the community impact

In NEA's practical experience (and also acknowledged more widely) it is critical that householders and vulnerable people in particular are able to have access to and benefit from advice on energy efficiency measures in order to maximise the benefits that the measures can deliver. This means providing simple controls and non-technical instructions and training for the measures that have been installed.

The Energy Saving Trust has produced guidelines on providing effective advice to tenants. If advice is to be effective:

It needs to be specific to individuals and their circumstances... and it is necessary to gather information from tenants, diagnose their problem(s), explain the available options and recommend further action that can be taken to improve energy efficiency. The distribution of general information (eg leaflets) is not considered to be energy advice.⁷¹

The list below highlights the areas where tenants regularly need advice:

- heating systems and controls (for example, how to work the programmer, setting room thermostats)
- controlling condensation in the home (for example, understanding and minimising the causes of condensation)
- paying for fuel (for example, where they can go for fuel debt advice or the most appropriate tariffs)
- the running costs of electrical appliances (for example, the costs of using electric hobs and the most effective form of electric heaters)
- further advice and support (for example, other low cost and no cost measures that could be installed, local and national grant and discount schemes, or who to contact for further advice or repairs)

Where advice of this nature is provided the practical results are hugely positive. Through the provision of advice, there is a key opportunity to amplify the benefits of CESP measures that have been installed and in turn maximise the experience of the programme in general.

Though there was clearly an advice provision, it has not been possible to determine the extent to which the Walsall householders universally received comprehensive advice. Participants praised the support and information that was delivered verbally by the installers. Most received written information and the vast majority were also shown how to use and maintain their new installations. The group commented that

the installers had left instruction booklets and given good guidance on how to operate new boilers. However, some of the more elderly residents said they found the booklets confusing and had to rely on family members to come around and make any adjustments to heating controls or timers. Some tenants also highlighted that because they were at work when this advice was scheduled to be delivered, they were only given booklets and not shown how to work the system. All information on care of the cladding was verbal rather than written, but all residents who had received this measure were aware of basic facts, like how long the external cladding was guaranteed for and who tenants would need to contact if their cladding became damaged.

Perceptions of warmth, health and income

Our focus groups provided some evidence to suggest that the CESP measures had changed householders' perception of energy use within their home and also modified their behaviour. Participants generally reported their homes to be warmer for longer, therefore requiring less heating. All residents reported feeling increased levels of warmth on cold days, but interestingly, the converse was also noted, with several householders reporting how cool homes remained on warm days. Box 1 shows some typical quotes from stakeholders.

Box 1 **Quotes from people in the Walsall focus group**

Before we had to leave the radiators on all the time, but now just an hour.

The place is definitely warmer with the new CH.

Before, it was cold and damp. I had to buy portable gas fires for every room, and had them on all the time. You don't need it now.

My husband's not well and he would always wear a shirt and jumper but he's not now, he's wearing a t shirt.

We haven't had the heating on for more than 3 weeks.

Haven't had the heating on for a long time.

There aren't as many draughts as before. Before I would have put the heating on or a jumper, now I don't have to bother. I don't have to turn the heating up or anything

No matter what room you're in it's always warm. Even in the hall.

Householders were also made more fully aware of the link between improvements to the energy efficiency of the property and health impacts and reductions in external noise (such as buses). A survey conducted by Walsall Council asked residents who had received energy saving measures whether or not the frequency of their visits to the doctor had increased or decreased after the measures had been installed. There had been no change for the vast majority, suggesting it is too early to establish whether these measures had had a health impact. Similarly, it was too early for the majority of residents to tell whether the measures had reduced their fuel bills.

During the stakeholder session, a project team member commented to households that the effect of the latest bout of fuel price increases may be cushioned by the energy saving measures. Interestingly, residents saw this the other way round: money saved on energy bills would be negated by price rises. Again, this was reinforced by comments that the full effect could only be judged after 12 months following the works.

When asked if the experience had changed any of their views on looking after the environment, most participants said they were aware of the issue and were behaving as efficiently as they could. Many said they recycled, but had done this pre-installation, and attributed this to wider environmental campaigns run by the council and media. However, there were indications that the installation of energy saving measures had an impact on individual behaviour of some of the residents. One participant said he had replaced his light bulbs with more energy efficient ones. Another commented, 'anything like this makes you more focused on what is going on around you', suggesting

that being involved in a scheme designed to reduce carbon emissions can make individuals more aware of the wider context of why there is a need for these reductions to be made.

Looking back at the scheme and the impact of the energy efficiency measures on their day-to-day lives, the vast majority of participants were very happy with the overall outcomes of the scheme and said they would recommend a similar scheme to other potential beneficiaries (boxes 2 and 3). Despite some minor complains, participants gave an overall rating of between 8 and 10 (10 was excellent) for the scheme. Residents' perceptions of British Gas have also been improved through the CESP programme.

Box 2 Residents' testimony

Christine and John Dunn from Thames Road have lived in the same house for 36 years. External cladding was fitted to the outside of their house and a new boiler was installed. Mrs Dunn commented:

We're already starting to feel the benefit. Our home is definitely much warmer and we don't have to have the heating on as much as we did previously. We had our granddaughter to stay with us recently and she said it was so warm she had to kick her quilt off in the night. It's also good to know that this is helping us do our bit for the environment too – we'd recommend it to anyone.⁷²

Community impact

Noting their increased individual wellbeing and pride in their homes, participants were asked about their perceptions of the impact of the scheme on the wellbeing of the community as a whole. Nearly all of them thought that the built environment across the estate had improved the area for the better, the area felt a better place to live in and was more welcoming as a result: 'It puts a smile on everyone's face.' Residents believed that the works added a positive effect of the perception of Blakenall. One participant said: 'It's like being at the seaside, all the different

colours.’ A strong indication of the scale of improvements to the local area was the (clearly unintended) animosity from residents in nearby streets who did not receive energy saving measures.

We also heard from residents on the positive impact the upgrades to the built environment had had on the day-to-day upkeep of the area; there was a general feeling that it gave people an incentive to look after their gardens and take more care of their local area. Participants said they had subsequently made concerted efforts to maintain a tidy community, a practical example of the ‘broken-window’ theory,⁷³ the implications of which will be expanded on in chapter 4. However, some felt they had been let down in this respect because of the continued poor upkeep of other elements of the street by the local council.

As well as the effects of the improvement of the built environment and perceptions of the local area, participants also noted how the scheme had led to increased interaction between residents. Simply talking to a neighbour about the nature of the work they were having done, how well the work was progressing, or the colour of the cladding they were going to receive had a tangible effect on the interaction and communication between residents, who might not have previously had experiences to share, or who they had never talked to before. As one participant from the focus group commented, ‘Since it’s been going on, people have been communicating a bit more’, even if it is just to compare the work undertaken and share the experience of the scheme. Another participant noted how since having the measures installed, ‘I think some people have got friendly a bit more, yes.’ This shows that the social capital of the estate – the relationships within a community, between families, friends, neighbours and colleagues – through the strengthening of previously existing networks within the community, and through the formation of new networks between individuals who previously did not have relationships, has clearly been improved.

One of the key indicators of community cohesion is whether or not people feel they belong to their local area. One focus group participant commented that ‘it is now a pleasure to walk down my street’. As previously noted, the scheme received a significant level of attention at the outset in the media, which

clearly helped in developing a sense of community action in the work, giving residents in a previously run-down area something to take great pride in. As one participant explained, the attention received at the outset was so great that it seemed, ‘too good to be true’. Our focus group with residents demonstrates how the positive effects on individuals’ sense of pride in their houses, combined with the sense of a community coming together to share a positive event, has had a tangible benefit on their quality of life and improved their attachment to the local area.

However, the individuals we spoke to also noted how the effect of upgrading a whole street – the street-by-street approach taken by CESP – was, to an extent, tempered by the fact that not all the owner-occupiers in the area had received external wall insulation. One resident commented: ‘I live in a row of five houses and only one has not had it done and you look at that and it’s appalling.’ This shows the importance of engaging with all sectors of the community, in particular the owner-occupiers in the area, who would not be receiving the measures free of charge through the housing association.

Box 3 **A resident’s testimony**

Mrs York, a WHG customer, said:

Due to having external wall insulation and new heating I have not had my heating on since February. My gas bill has gone from £63 a month to £38; only having a pension this has made such a difference to my life.

I also received £75 back from British Gas [in a] rebate from what I had paid. I used this money to pay for my TV licence. Anyone who has this work done will notice a massive benefit. I would recommend to anyone to have the work done.

Key findings and lessons learnt

The Walsall scheme was well promoted within the community, which had a demonstrable effect on the up-take of energy efficiency measures within the private rented sector. However,

confusion and mixed messaging about the financial offering available to assist private tenants in paying for the measures had the opposite effect, putting off some private sector tenants who were initially interested. This indicates the importance of effective engagement and communication from the delivery partners, at the outset and throughout the scheme, to ensure a successful uptake and positive experience for households.

From the residents' perspective, the installation process was a success, despite some specific minor concerns, such as the time the installation took to complete. Residents reported warmer and drier homes on cold days and cooler homes on warm days. However, it would not be clear until a year after the energy saving measures were installed whether they had reduced fuel bills. It was apparent that minor concerns from residents, such as rubbish being left in driveways, quickly became major talking points among neighbours and risked undermining the benefits of the work. However, the dedicated tenant liaison officer was able to deal effectively with many of the problems and was therefore a key feature in the success of the scheme.

Residents were pleased with the advice and assistance they had received about how to use their newly installed measures, although residents at work during the times when advice was scheduled to be delivered missed out. Ensuring that as great a proportion of tenants as possible receive this advice is crucial if the measures are to be effective in helping drive changes to behaviour, a point that is expanded on in the next chapter. From a community perspective, residents were pleased with the improvements not only to the physical environment – a notable visual improvement to the estate – but also to the social environment, with the scheme having built social capital on the estate through promoting increased contact between neighbours with new, shared interests.

Stafford

The economic context of the Highfields Estate in Stafford, where our second case study is located, is slightly different from that in Walsall. Like Walsall, Stafford's economy has traditionally been

dominated by a strong manufacturing and engineering base, with a notable specialism in electrical engineering, but also public administration. This is evident in the high percentage of the workforce, around 40 per cent, employed in the public sector.⁷⁴ In recent years there has been a contraction in the manufacturing sector, with 1,700 jobs lost between 2003 and 2008, with forecasts predicting a further decline in jobs of 14.4 per cent by 2026.⁷⁵ However, unlike Walsall, Stafford is a relatively prosperous borough in comparison with its neighbouring areas, with unemployment below the county, regional, national and Walsall averages, and wages higher than the national and Walsall averages.⁷⁶

Nonetheless there are a number of areas that suffer from much higher than average levels of claimants for Income Support and Incapacity Benefit, which correlate to high levels of multiple deprivation and low average incomes.⁷⁷ According to the 2007 IMD, on which CESP eligibility is determined, two of Stafford's Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) fell within the most deprived 10 per cent nationally, accounting for 3 per cent of the borough's population.⁷⁸ One of these LSOAs is located within the Highfields and Western Downs wards, which includes the Highfields Estate, the location of our case study CESP scheme in Stafford. The proportion of the ward's population in the most deprived national quintile of multiple deprivation in 2007 was 27.4 per cent, compared with Stafford's figure of 3.1 per cent.⁷⁹

The ward is around two miles south of Stafford City Centre and in 2010 its population was 6,400, with 4.5 per cent of the population from minority ethnic groups, a much lower figure than the national average of 9 per cent.⁸⁰ In 2001, the rate of unemployment in the ward was 7.2 per cent, nearly double that for the Stafford borough (4.3 per cent) and higher than the national average (5.7 per cent). In the same year, the percentage of people who were economically inactive was 24.3 per cent in Highfields, compared with 22.6 per cent in Stafford as a whole, but below the national average, which stood at 26 per cent.⁸¹ In August 2011, 4.9 per cent of the population were claiming Jobseeker's Allowance, compared with 2.3 per cent in the wider

Stafford region and 3.9 per cent nationally. In addition, in February 2011 the percentage of residents in Highfields and Western Downs claiming benefits of any kind including Jobseeker's Allowance was just over one in five (21.6 per cent). This compares with 10.9 per cent in Stafford and 14.7 per cent nationally.⁸² These statistics clearly indicate there are high levels of benefits dependency and low income in the Highfields area.

In 2009/10 the life expectancy at birth for men in Highfields and Western Downs was 76 years and 80.5 years for women, both below the Stafford averages of 77.9 and 82.2, respectively.⁸³ The premature mortality rates in Highfields were considerably worse than those for Stafford and the country as a whole. Mental illness and smoking prevalence were higher than the national average, though the percentage of residents reporting a limiting long-term illness was lower.⁸⁴

DECC's latest figures estimate that 21 per cent of all households in Stafford are in fuel poverty. As well as signing up to National Indicators 186 – per capita reduction in CO₂ emissions in the local authority area – and 187 – tackling fuel poverty – within their local area agreement, Stafford Borough Council has recently produced an affordable warmth strategy.⁸⁵ The report notes that the percentage of households in fuel poverty is 16 per cent, slightly lower than DECC's estimate. This strategy includes an action plan, which has three key aims: raise awareness of fuel poverty and affordable warmth, encourage all households to achieve affordable warmth and ensure strategy delivery, development and evaluation.⁸⁶

Stafford's housing stock

Stafford Borough Council has a priority to improve the physical condition of the housing stock across all tenures, with a specific target to reduce by 10 per cent the percentage of properties within the borough with a SAP rating below 35. The Council commissioned a house condition and energy efficiency survey in 2008. The report found that the average SAP rating for private sector dwellings in the borough was 60.9 (good) (against the

UK average); less than 0.4 per cent of properties have a SAP rating of less than 10, 2.7 per cent having ratings between 11 and 30; 20 per cent between 31 and 50; and over 75 per cent above 50. Approximately 7,500 houses (13.5 per cent) of houses in the borough were built before 1919 and are classified as 'difficult to treat'. The report also found that 3.1 per cent of the housing stock had a SAP rating of under 30.

Three-quarters of all households in the borough are owner-occupiers, around 10 per cent are in private rented accommodation and the remainder are housing association and other public sector dwellings. The affordable warmth strategy shows that the highest concentration of fuel poverty is in the private rented sector, where at least 40 per cent or around 2,150 households are likely to be affected. This represents around a quarter of the fuel poverty for the borough as a whole in less than 4 per cent of its housing stock.

In the Stafford CESP scheme, the primary partnership was between Stafford and Rural Housing Association (SaRH) and British Gas although the local council was also involved initially. Some 409 housing association properties received a mixture of external wall insulation, heating measures and loft insulation, and planned to undertake home energy advice (HEA) visits. In addition, 22 home owners received external wall insulation, heating, loft insulation and some HEA visits. As well as interviewing SaRH staff and local contractors, the project team sent a survey to all residents who had received measures.

Findings from the Stafford case study

As a result of the changes highlighted in the methodology, it is only possible to get a partial view of whether the programme was effective and inspired further community benefits by drawing solely on our feedback from householders. However, through discussion with representatives of the Highfields Estate Residents and Tenants Association for a Good Environment (HERaTAGE) community group, it is possible to point to some of the impacts that the CESP programme has had on the community more widely.

The project team received 35 responses from SaRH tenants who received measures free of charge, and a further five from owner-occupiers who had paid a contribution towards the measures received. Nine households contained at least one dependent child, three contained dependants aged 16–18 in full-time education and 17 contained at least one member aged 60 or over.

Resident satisfaction

A large majority (90 per cent) of households surveyed said they were satisfied with the installation process overall, with almost one in three very satisfied with the CESP measures they have received. The questionnaire found that householders' satisfaction relates to three main areas:

- the impact of the work on their feelings of wellbeing or health
- a perception that the work had been carried out well, their home looked better or the work had added value
- the ability they had to achieve affordable warmth in their home more easily following the work

Respondents were asked how happy they were with the measures received from CESP (box 4). Over four-fifths (84 per cent) of respondents were happy, with 58 per cent very happy. When asked why they were happy or unhappy about the measures they had received, a number of comments related to feelings of increased health and wellbeing. One respondent noted: 'Because I suffer from emphysema, my health has been a problem, but I find my house a lot warmer now.' Another said that members of the household had fewer colds since the installation of the measures. The impact of greater feelings of warmth on householders with a disability was also pointed out as an additional benefit. As well as some specific health benefits, a number of respondents noted how feelings of general wellbeing had improved. One commented that 'life is much nicer now', and another that 'we feel more relaxed and free from worry about heating bills'.

While just under half of households surveyed (45 per cent) agreed that their energy bills had reduced since receiving CESP measures, it should be noted that, as in Walsall, some households were apprehensive or reserving their judgement until they had experienced a full year or the coming winter: one in three households (36 per cent) said it was too early to tell whether their energy bills had decreased. While there were both positive and negative comments about installers, contractors or workmen, usually respondents reported that installers were polite and considerate of their needs. Just a handful of people said they were dissatisfied and, as highlighted later in the report, this was largely attributed to protracted installation periods, in some cases poor communication with households and some incidents of damage to property or worries about disruption. Most householders felt satisfied with the advice they had received on the measures that were installed.

Box 4 **A resident's testimony**

Mrs Jenkinson, 68, a retired cleaner who has lived on the Highfields Estate in Stafford for 43 years, spoke about what the energy efficiency programme – a new central heating system, an electric fire and new doors – means to her and her family:

We're all really excited, as we've never had anything like this before. Keeping our home warm has been a real challenge up until now; the house has been damp and cold, the wallpaper regularly peeled off the walls and I was always worried about the size of our energy bills. I'm looking forward to seeing the savings we make on our energy bills too, as I need to have the heating on continuously for my disabled husband and two boys who are always at home.⁸⁷

Impacts beyond the home

Results also suggest that for many households there has been an improvement beyond their own home. More than two-thirds (70 per cent) of respondents surveyed stated that their

neighbourhood's appearance had improved since the measures were received, with some describing the improvements in the appearance of not only their home, but also their street. One respondent explained that they were satisfied with the outcome of the programme because 'the houses look better'. Another said, 'I was delighted by the repainting of the fences, gates, stairwells, balcony areas and so on. This attention to detail has really improved the overall appearance of the neighbourhood.' Interestingly, some households appeared to be disapproving of households that did not have the works done or anxious about neighbours who may not help to maintain the improved appearance of the neighbourhood.

The project team asked respondents whether the energy saving measures had had any impact on their environmental behaviour around the home. More than four-fifths stated that it was important for their household to reduce the amount of energy used in their home and just over half indicated that since receiving the measures they had either reduced their energy use at home a lot, or were starting to reduce it. Actions taken to save energy include: using energy saving light bulbs, only heating water when required and not leaving electrical appliances on.

Respondents reported using less water following the installation by taking a shower rather than a bath, using wastewater in the garden, and using less water than before to clean dishes. These results suggest that CESP measures have stimulated some households to save energy, although it is difficult to ascertain whether the reduction was due to direct behaviour change or the presence of measures that save energy without the householder having to act.

Community impact

The project team wanted to know if there was evidence to demonstrate whether community cohesion had improved in the area. In their response to the questionnaire two-thirds of householders reported that they liked living in their home and area more since the CESP measures were put in place. The results also suggest that the installation of the measures may have increased social capital: over half of respondents (55 per

cent) said that the measures had been a topic of conversation with neighbours. More agreed (26 per cent) than disagreed (16.2 per cent) that their neighbourhood was friendlier since the installation of the measures.

There is also evidence that the scheme has encouraged the community to take further action to improve their local area. The leaders of the HERaTAGE community group, following the completion of the CESP scheme, identified a substantial increase in cooperation between residents and other organisations. Having seen the tangible effects of the improvements to their local area, HERaTAGE noticed a greater desire among residents to get involved with the HERaTAGE group. For example since the completion of the CESP scheme, HERaTAGE has coordinated the funding for the paving of a new dustbin standing area next to one of the blocks of flats that benefited from energy efficiency improvements.

This summary of the feedback we received suggests that the community-wide approach adopted by CESP has delivered benefits to households, which have been well received. As highlighted in Walsall, CESP was a new concept and successful delivery to communities and households relied to a large degree on the effective partnership of British Gas, the social housing provider, contractors, tenants or owners and the borough council.

However, in discussion with the key partners involved in Stafford, it was clear that there were a number of frustrations, project management and delivery issues that arose throughout the project and these led to missed opportunities. Some of these are discussed below:

Deciding which properties are eligible for CESP

Like many local authorities and social housing providers, despite knowing a number of areas were eligible for CESP measures, SaRH found it challenging to work out which properties within the borough (and social housing stock) were included within the CESP area. This uncertainty has often required organisations to interpret national guidelines and make (informed or arbitrary) assumptions, which are then cross-referenced with existing

spending plans (of the council or housing provider) in order to decide which properties were eligible for spending on refurbishment and repairs.

In Stafford, there were properties (flats) that the housing association had previously earmarked as requiring energy saving measures, but SaRH found that these properties fell outside of the LSOA boundary area designated as eligible for CESP, and therefore did not qualify for installation measures. This frustrated SaRH as considerable sums had previously been allocated in their business plan for this particular set of properties. Had they had the ability to leverage CESP funding in addition to their own contributions, undertaking upgrade work on properties outside the CESP zone as part of the same project, a greater proportion of SaRH's stock could have been reinvigorated, with many more tenants benefitting from warmer homes and lower bills. However, with the limitations of the scheme, these properties were not able to benefit from energy efficiency improvements. As noted in the section 'Key findings and lessons learnt', below, this has been symptomatic of a number of CESP schemes.

Matching responsibilities to capacity and adequate resources

The identification process in Stafford was slow and the hesitation affected the momentum of the project and delayed the commencement of work in eligible areas from the outset. While SaRH was at that time employing the services of a technical consultant, this issue also revealed to SaRH that there was a lack of internal expertise to fully appreciate the technical scope of the proposed works. This would later lead to deeper questions over ownership of project management and frustration on both sides.

Unfortunately, just as the work to install energy saving measures was about to commence, for reasons outside the direct control of SaRH or British Gas, the project suffered from further staffing resource difficulties. For six months SaRH did not have the necessary internal capacity to manage the delivery of the energy saving measures and this put strain on all involved and risked fracturing the fledgling relationship between British Gas and SaRH. At this point senior personnel on both sides

appreciated the scale of the logistical challenge and monthly update meetings were put in place between the project partners and their respective contractors. While resourcing issues and gaps in expertise were eventually plugged, the regular meetings largely failed in enhancing coordination as the underlying project delivery structures and respective responsibilities were still not in place or universally understood.

One area underlined as good practice in Walsall was a commitment to and ownership over the vital role of tenant liaison. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the employment of a dedicated person to deal with queries and concerns of householders in Walsall was essential for those involved in the scheme. In Stafford, there was no collective agreement on whether to fund a full-time tenant liaison officer on the project at this time. This issue became increasingly pressing as householders' enquiries started to increase.

As a result, as with Walsall, the building contractors – for example those installing the external wall insulation – were the only point of contact for householders, who would often assume they were employees of British Gas. These contractors were not able to deal with concerns and as there was no on-site tenant liaison officer to whom they could refer residents, they gave the householders the telephone number for their boiler installer or told them they needed to speak to the housing association. This clearly confused a number of residents, as it was not clear to whom enquiries or complaints should be directed. At this point SaRH asked British Gas to install a porter cabin on site to act as a focus for enquiries, but the respective parties could not agree who should pay for this overhead.

As in Walsall, British Gas employed local residents in Stafford to market the scheme, which once again was viewed positively within the area. However, at the same time as this process was ongoing, work began on around ten properties per week and around 80–90 properties had had scaffolding erected. While tenants and homeowners in Stafford reported overall satisfaction with the installation process, the slow delivery and length of time for which a large number of buildings were under scaffolding without the installation progressing further strained

partner relations and exposed deep frustration in the way in which the project was financially structured.

Transparency on costing and the offer to households

SaRH had made frequent requests for a cost breakdown for each measure and property, and argued this was critical to their ability to ascertain how much of their budget was committed to the project and how much was still left to spend before the year end. As with the Walsall project (and other CESP projects in general), this question is difficult to answer as householder contributions and net costs can only be determined for each householder once the amount (and combination) of measures are known.

Initially, the borough council considered setting up a credit union as a way to support the private sector, but it did not progress as there was poor take up. In the end (long after social tenants were receiving the energy saving measures) an arrangement was put in place with the Birmingham Kickstart project,⁸⁸ and Stafford Council was able to offer some access to financing through this package. The majority of owner occupiers who applied for financing took out unsecured loans. This facility was set up on the agreement that if tenants made all the payments during the first year, they did not have to pay back the full amount. However, with a maximum value of £2,000, the loans did not cover the total cost of the measures in all cases.⁸⁹ As with Walsall, this issue led to confusion over the offering (or contributions) to private homeowners⁹⁰ and hindered uptake within this tenure type.

Only 22 homeowners received measures and this low uptake had clearly reduced the success of the delivery of the whole-street approach that CESP aims to take. Both residents and delivery partners commented on the disappointing visual nature following the completion of the scheme, because of the significant proportion of owner-occupiers who did not receive measures, which detracted from the overall improvement to the streetscape. The street scene improvement requires a whole street to be renovated, consistently. One individual commented: 'It looks OK, but it is a bit of a hotchpotch.' This issue, coupled with the ability of tenants to choose from a diverse colour

palette, has led to concerns that the streetscape is now defined by tenure type, whether the household had cavity or solid walls and LSOA boundaries. This is a further example of the ways in which the success of the delivery process is vital if community-wide benefits of the scheme are to be achieved.

The need for collective evaluation and before and after energy assessments:

Under CESP, suppliers are not required to provide figures on carbon savings or heat cost savings generated by the measures. This potentially empowering information would provide householders with closure, a tangible record of what has been achieved in their home, and could amplify the perceived benefits.

Warm Zones has recently stated that it is possible to carry out a simple energy audit of a property by collecting 12 to 14 pieces of information on its energy efficiency, which makes it possible to make a SAP calculation. This enables the cost of heating the property to a recognised heating regime to be calculated, and therefore one can generate before and after cost savings and changes to Energy Performance Certificate (EPC).⁹¹ If the household income is also ascertained alongside the energy audit, the percentage of that household income required to meet that heating regime (the fuel poverty index) can also be calculated, to ascertain a household's fuel poverty status.

It would also then be possible to tailor the assistance to remove the household from fuel poverty. For example, it is suggested that basic packages of insulation and efficient heating systems should be provided to all eligible households, as is the case with current schemes. If this is not sufficient to lift the household out of fuel poverty (based on each household's fuel poverty index), further assistance could be provided, such as advice on additional income support measures or other support schemes. The costs of this approach and how it could be coordinated with other opportunities such as EPCs would need to be investigated further. If this information was produced on behalf of householders, it would reinforce the benefits that the scheme has brought about and highlight other forms of support they may benefit from.

Loss of a wider perspective

Representatives from SaRH felt that the slow start and rush to finish the installation of the measures resulted in a blinkered approach. With hindsight, they realised they had to focus solely on delivering the measures on time, to the detriment of aligning the scheme with wider objectives. Two areas in particular were identified, providing an interesting contrast to Walsall. While local residents were used to market the scheme, it was recognised that the potential employment and training opportunities for local people could have been exploited further, as it had been in Walsall. An apprenticeship scheme, for example, could have been developed, in partnership with contractors, with the apprentices subsequently being taken on by the housing association following the completion of the works, but lack of foresight about how this scheme could have been delivered and the lack of time to develop the necessary local partnerships meant the opportunity was lost.

The second key missed opportunity was that of engaging with local schools. In Walsall, solar panels were installed at a number of local schools, acting as an educational tool for children, saving money on the schools' electricity bills and reducing their environmental impact. However, despite a number of attempts, solar panels were not installed as part of the Stafford scheme. SaRH felt that this was a missed opportunity to engage the wider community and generate a greater sense of collective action around the scheme. A key lesson is not to lose sight of the bigger picture and the potential to combine the installation of energy efficiency measures with wider neighbourhood regeneration initiatives in the local area. An example of an initiative that might have been considered is to explore further avenues of local area improvement, such as input from local businesses to sponsor the improvement of playgrounds.

Key findings and lessons learnt

From the residents' perspective, the Stafford scheme was a success, as they had high levels of satisfaction with the installation process, warmer homes and reduced bills. Nonetheless, similar complaints were made to those in Walsall

regarding protracted installation periods and poor communication from contractors, and these complaints were not dealt with effectively as there was no dedicated tenant liaison officer, an important lesson learnt from this case study.

Householders recognised benefits beyond the improvements to their own homes, noting those to the streetscape and greater levels of interaction and communication between neighbours, demonstrating the role of the scheme in building social capital.

Despite these positive outcomes, discussion with key delivery partners revealed a number of important frustrations, including complications in identifying properties to be included within the CESP area and frustration at not being able to include a number of properties previously earmarked as requiring energy efficiency improvements. These problems, combined with a slow start to the project, an absence of the required technical expertise and experience at SaRH, and the dividing of responsibility for delivery between multiple stakeholders, ultimately led to a blinkered approach to delivering the scheme and a rush to finish on time. The knock-on effect was a loss of focus on the potential of the scheme to deliver wider social, economic and environmental outcomes, such as employment benefits or opportunities to engage with the local school. These findings demonstrate the importance of ensuring there is an effective process in order to maximise the beneficial outcomes.

4 Wider implications

In chapter 1 we discussed a framework of potential additional outcomes relating to the sustainability of neighbourhoods and communities that can result from improvements to the local infrastructure. The potential outcomes were categorised under four key domains:

- living within environmental limits
- achieving a sustainable economy
- promoting good governance
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society

Our research into the effects of the improvement to the local housing stock through two CESP schemes has shown that positive outcomes were achieved in all of these areas. This suggests these two area-based programmes have been successful, through delivering energy efficiency improvements and helping build more sustainable communities – environmentally, economically and socially. Our research has shown that *the way* in which the schemes are delivered – the effectiveness and scope of the local and community-based partnerships – has the greatest impact on the ability of the programme to deliver against these wider potential outcomes. The evidence and implications of each of these four outcomes will be discussed in turn.

Living within environmental limits

Sadly not everyone in the UK can afford to meet their energy needs in the home, sufficient for good health, comfort and wellbeing, but learning to live within our environmental limits, through a reduction in our energy consumption, is vital if we are

collectively to reduce our carbon emissions. Our research shows that the energy efficiency measures installed through CESP have reduced the amount of energy used by residents in their homes and reduced the environmental impact of their communities. In most cases this has been achieved primarily through the provision of home insulation, enabling residents to reduce their consumption of electricity and gas in ways that have not necessitated a change in behaviour. However, in a number of cases, we found evidence of positive behavioural change, such as switching off appliances and taking a shower instead of a bath, after energy saving measures had been installed. This suggests the process of installation of those measures raised awareness of energy efficiency and climate change issues and had a knock-on effect on families' behaviour in some households.

As mentioned above, the success or failure of these schemes in achieving wider social and community outcomes hinges on the effectiveness of the partnerships developed. In Walsall, an effective partnership with local schools allowed for the installation of solar panels, helping the school to reduce its environmental impact, but also providing it with a tool to teach pupils about the importance of fighting climate change and providing practical experience in how this can be achieved. The failure to develop this partnership in the Stafford case study was viewed by the delivery partners as an important missed opportunity to teach children about climate change and engage with the wider community rather than just those directly served by the scheme.

Achieving a sustainable economy

A sustainable economy is a fundamental part of a sustainable community. Reducing running costs of buildings for residents and alleviating fuel poverty help develop greater resilience to future energy price rises. It is clear that CESP has been effective in providing affordable warmth, and although in many cases it is too early to determine the exact effects the measures will have on annual fuel bills, it is expected they will lead to warmer homes and financial savings.

CESP and associated programmes to upgrade the energy efficiency of our building stock, such as the forthcoming Green Deal, have the potential to boost demand for this now rapidly emerging sector. In doing so, these schemes are promoting the development of a more sustainable and less carbon intensive economy while also addressing pressing social issues. As noted when introducing our two case studies, both CESP schemes were delivered in deprived areas, with higher than average levels of unemployment. Neighbourhood retrofits provide a chance to generate employment opportunities in the local area, with effective joined-up working having demonstrated significant employment possibilities in the past. Our case studies show that these opportunities are possible through CESP, but they depend on building the necessary partnerships between delivery partners, such as the housing association, the local council and contractors. In Walsall, where these partnerships were forged, there was full-time employment for eight individuals, but the necessary partnerships were not developed in Stafford, so these opportunities were lost.

Groundwork, an organisation with experience in providing training and employment support in many areas that are eligible for CESP schemes, has suggested that aligning Future Jobs Funding with CESP funding would be an effective way of developing the necessary partnerships to maximise the opportunities for employment and low-carbon skills development that CESP can offer.⁹² Other initiatives would also be useful, for example exploiting the opportunities that the installation process provides for apprenticeships and also for the community to get involved through volunteering.

Promoting good governance

Our research has shown that governance and leadership in CESP schemes is critical in achieving positive outcomes. Determining which organisation is leading the scheme and who is taking responsibility for the delivery of different elements is critical in ensuring engagement with all sectors of the community. As our case studies have shown, the contrasting transparency of

responsibility and leadership across the two schemes had a discernable effect on outcomes. In Walsall, where it was clear to participants who was running the scheme and who they could turn to in the event of a problem, the relationship between the delivery partners and the residents receiving the measures was healthy. In contrast, in Stafford there was less transparency over which delivery partners were responsible for particular aspects of the scheme, and it was not clear to residents whom they should contact if they had a problem, and the relationships between delivery partners and residents suffered.

Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society

A strong, healthy and just society depends on individual health and wellbeing, but also on the collective health and wellbeing of a community, which in turn influences community cohesion. By providing warmer homes, CESP has enhanced the wellbeing of residents who benefited from the scheme, by reducing anxiety over keeping homes warm in the face of rising fuel costs, and through more direct effects, such as eliminating damp and its potential adverse health effects. A number of residents reported positive impacts to their health after the work was carried out. Delivered in deprived areas, where health problems can often be pervasive, CESP or future schemes can have an important effect on reducing entrenched health inequalities.

A key element of a strong and healthy society is quality of place. Improvements in people's homes and wider built environment have been shown to promote pride and positive feelings of community. The street-by-street approach promoted by CESP clearly aims to exploit the effects that a good quality environment can have on its residents. Our findings suggest CESP has been successful in achieving this goal, albeit to slightly different extents.

In Walsall, where the street-by-street approach was largely a success, with the scheme achieving a greater overall coverage across housing tenure, the increase in civic pride is demonstrable. However, in Stafford, where less total coverage was achieved and the street-by-street approach less of a success, improvements in

community pride and positive involvement are therefore less clear.

CESP was designed to involve the local community directly in its delivery, in order to improve take-up and facilitate the provision of additional, or non-energy benefits. This draws on the ideas behind co-production – delivering services with, not for, users – by attempting to deliver measures *with*, not just *for*, residents. Previous work has shown that when individuals are involved in the design of infrastructure themselves, it gives a greater sense of ownership. For example, young people are less likely to vandalise a place if they have been closely involved in its design and development, because they have greater feelings of attachment to that place.⁹³ Schemes should promote the greatest level of community involvement and user engagement in the work. The forthcoming legislation on neighbourhood plans contained in the Localism Bill, where local communities will be empowered to take responsibility for the planning of their own neighbourhoods, offers an interesting avenue for greater community involvement in future retrofitting schemes.⁹⁴

Integration, trust and belonging are all key components of community cohesion. While we were not able to measure levels of cohesion before and after the measures and quantify the impacts of the measures, there is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that the CESP schemes have increased residents' sense of belonging to their areas and built social capital through creating interactions and trust between neighbours. The CESP process – taking place in an entire street as a shared, common experience by several neighbours – generated opportunities for neighbours to talk and compare experiences, which in turn has the potential to increase social capital when new relationships and social networks are formed between neighbours. This can have a range of positive benefits. For example, fear of crime has been shown to be significantly higher in areas where there are few social networks and where neighbours tend not to know each other.⁹⁵ The potential for reducing isolation and loneliness for older people or those living alone is also a desirable outcome, which will become increasingly important as the UK's demographic profile continues to age.

Another potential community-based benefit that CESP achieved was to spur wider community regeneration. Improving the physical environment of a disadvantaged area can have a dramatic impact on promoting wider improvements. According to the Broken Window Theory, as developed by George L. Kelling, for example, small improvements to a physical environment, and subsequent monitoring of these improvements, can prevent anti-social behaviour and vandalism and halt further deterioration into more serious criminal activities. In turn, these improvements can have a demonstrable impact on the social capital and wellbeing of a community. We found evidence of this ‘virtuous circle’ effect of small improvements accruing from the physical improvements delivered through CESP: investment in people’s houses led to residents looking after their gardens more carefully than they had previously in order to maintain the improved appearance of their homes, and to make additional investments as a community in further improving other elements of local infrastructure, such as the new paved dustbin areas outside a number blocks of flats that received measures in Stafford.

Inward investment in a local area can also dramatically influence local perceptions of those within and outside the community. As Demos has previously argued, deprived areas can suffer from a postcode stigma.⁹⁶ Removing the stigma of an area and creating ‘postcode pride’ can have a dramatic effect on the abilities of those residents to find employment and their likelihood of extending their social networks outside their immediate surroundings.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

Key conclusions: lessons learnt

The residents who received energy efficiency measures in Walsall and Stafford were largely satisfied with the delivery of the schemes and the final outcomes. Furthermore, there is evidence that their homes are now warmer and cheaper to heat. From a narrow perspective, in delivering more affordable warmth, both schemes can broadly be considered a success. However, a number of important issues emerged with regard to the contrasting success of the *process*, from the perspective of the delivery partners. From a wider viewpoint it is clear that the Walsall scheme had a more discernable impact by delivering added benefits to the community.

Common to both schemes was the limited success of the street-by-street approach that CESP aims to deliver. Although the uptake by the private rented sector was higher in Walsall than in Stafford, the visual impact of some houses not receiving the energy saving measures was widely considered a disappointment in both areas. A wider uptake was achieved in Walsall through a better-planned financial offer to the private residents, an important lesson to be learnt. It is also clear that ensuring a tenant liaison officer is in place for the duration of the work is hugely important in managing the day-to-day issues that will emerge. In Walsall the tenant liaison officer was able to resolve problems quickly, whereas in Stafford the lack of a tenant liaison officer meant that issues were not dealt with effectively, with many persisting beyond the completion of the project.

The measured implementation of the Walsall scheme and the effective partnerships that developed between the housing association and contractors led to the work being delivered to expectations, but also allowed for wider engagement with the local school and local employment opportunities. However in

Stafford, problems with delivery – particularly the dividing of responsibility between multiple stakeholders – led to delays and a rush to finish the work, resulting in a number of missed opportunities, including patchy coverage across the estate, a failure to pursue the employment potential of the work and a lack of engagement with local schools.

From our research, we have drawn a number of key conclusions about delivering area-based energy efficiency schemes successfully:

- Investing time in exploring ownership over discrete areas of the project delivery, actions and relationships is a key area of project management and mutually reinforcing partnerships.
- The level of prescription within the policy has delivered improvements in deprived areas; although these outcomes must be applauded, the lack of flexibility to allow the scheme to be extended to areas directly outside the eligible area undoubtedly led to missed opportunities and prevented the benefits of the schemes from being delivered on a wider scale.
- Community-wide energy efficiency schemes get people talking about their area and their experience of the scheme. The attitudes displayed towards the scheme in interactions can be positive or negative, but generally these discussions strengthen community bonds, develop social capital, and may prompt further community discussion.
- Community-wide energy efficiency schemes can provide added impetus for existing community groups (or individuals) and enhance confidence about taking further action to improve their local area.

Recommendations

The conclusion to the report can be put simply and at heart there is a straightforward message: the ‘how’ is just as important as the ‘what’ when it comes to CESP. A sense of ownership regarding the delivery of the scheme is central to householders’ perceptions of whether the scheme is being done in their interests or is something that is simply being done to them. Based on our

findings and conclusions, we have identified a range of ways in which to ensure ‘the basics’ of delivering warmer homes are achieved:

- High profile engagement captures residents’ attention and spreads awareness of the scheme, but there is also a need to reinforce this with door-to-door marketing and advice provision by a known and trusted agent.
- The owner-occupier offer and the responsibility for this group must be established and communicated at the beginning of the project. This will aid the take-up of the scheme across tenure but is also a key element in enhancing community cohesion and achieving a harmonised streetscape.
- Energy efficiency interventions in hard to treat properties are often disruptive. It is critical this is explained to householders before the work starts. Householders are often prepared to put up with disruption if they are aware of how long it will last and understand that any estimates of the completion date might change.
- During the delivery phase it is important that a trusted local agent is used as a point of liaison and can manage the relationship between the client (householder), main contractor and sub-contractor. This agent is more likely to be alert to (and have a sense of responsibility for) issues that seemed relatively minor, which if not addressed could end up undermining many of the benefits the scheme may bring.
- It is critical to provide comprehensive and universal advice, not only to ensure the householder gets the most out of the measures installed, but also to underline the benefits the scheme has brought. If householders are confident that they have been given the opportunity to ask questions and learn how to optimise the use of the measures installed, confidence in the programme is greatly increased. If this learning is shared within the community, there is no doubt that it enhances the community impact.
- Before and after evaluation of project management and householder experience is critical for further driving improvements in the delivery and cost effectiveness of the scheme.

Our research has demonstrated that area-based energy efficiency schemes such as CESP, when delivered well, can deliver a range of economic, social and environmental outcomes to residents and the wider community in which they live. We have developed a series of best practice recommendations to enable future schemes to maximise the opportunities to deliver these wider benefits:

- Where possible, schemes should be aligned with relevant funding streams and initiatives tackling local unemployment to ensure that the installation process generates opportunities for local jobs and skills development.
- Local authorities and housing associations should look to CESP and similar schemes as a potential opportunity for generating community pride and a shared community experience of regeneration, which improves community networks.
- Future schemes would benefit from the input of urban design guidance at the project outset, in order to maximise the potential aesthetic benefits in improving the quality of place. This will in turn amplify the wider social and environmental benefits of an area-based retrofitting scheme.
- To ensure that households and communities are fully equipped to reduce their environmental impact, they must be equipped with not only the right tools, but also the right information. Energy efficiency measures can provide the tools, but backing this up with clear instructions about using the measures, and information on additional ways to greener living, are critical.
- Home energy advice packages – where residents are shown how to use their new installations to maximise the energy saving – are an important tool in achieving the above.
- Opportunities to develop links with local schools and colleges in order to educate and raise awareness of environmental issues should be considered a crucial aspect on area-based schemes, educating the next generation of householders in living more sustainable lifestyles.

- CESP and other schemes should be seen as teaching tools and a spur to behavioural change, but can only be achieved if the home improvements are delivered in a wider, whole-house and whole-street context.

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Campaigning for Warm Homes

Energy prices have skyrocketed, leaving many in fuel poverty this winter. This trend will only continue year-on-year – energy is not going to get cheaper. Higher energy prices have a disproportionate impact on the vulnerable and the poorest, as they have less to spend and occupy energy inefficient homes. Dramatic levels of capital investment are needed to make the UK’s ageing and inefficient housing stock fit for the challenges ahead. This will help tackle fuel poverty and address the UK’s legally binding carbon emissions targets.

The Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP), launched in September 2009, is an attempt to provide that investment. Funded by large energy suppliers and generators, the government initiative intends to increase warmth and reduce household fuel bills and carbon emissions through a ‘whole house’ approach to energy efficiency. The programme is delivered through the establishment of community-based partnerships between local authorities, housing associations, community groups and energy companies. This report investigates the impact of CESP through case studies of two schemes – the Rivers Estate in Blakenall, Walsall, and the Highfields Estate in Stafford.

The Warm-Up reviews the success of CESP both in its stated aims, and in generating a wider set of community benefits – instilling a sense of pride and confidence. It finds that when executed well, energy efficiency schemes that take a street-by-street approach can offer social, economic and environmental regeneration in addition to tackling fuel poverty and carbon emissions.

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