



Highfield Food Co-op: Energy Matters - A community response to saving energy

OVERVIEW

Highfield Food Co-op is a multicultural, user-led community action group, designed to combat growing health issues in the local area. The Co-op encourages behavioural changes to improve health and wellbeing and delivers a range of projects, such as organised coffee mornings for isolated people aged over 55 and world cinema presentations to encourage people to come together and share their cultural heritage.

They also delivered the government-funded programme, First Steps, to complete an approved community action plan on recycling and community fly-tipping. The project actively involved the community at every stage, and revealed that people were passionate enough about these issues to want to take social action to tackle them.

Keighley suffers from high levels of unemployment; many people, particularly older vulnerable people, cannot afford to use their heating. Residents are largely uninformed about government schemes for free insulation and boilers, with little knowledge about energy saving methods in their homes.

SOLUTION

The Co-op planned 14 weekly education and information exchange sessions on fuel poverty and other energy issues, such as energy saving methods and presentations by an energy specialist. Eight Community Energy Champions were to be trained and would help to deliver energy saving sessions.

Initial research was carried out to find out what people knew and what they required support with. The project was successful in bringing different communities together, including traditionally hard to reach communities, such as refugees and economic migrants.

The Co-op also worked well with other organisations, sharing information with the Green Doctors in Leeds, Warm Homes in Bradford, and other Bradford council initiatives.

The Co-op created a platform where people could learn about Government and council schemes, helping and supporting those who have issues with paying bills, providing the confidence and information to search for the best energy providers and to compare tariffs.

OUTCOMES

Over 100 people were given literature about fuel poverty. 28 families were given energy advice and leaflets about energy saving leaflets, as well as energy saving bulbs and timers. In addition, four volunteers received Health and Safety in the Community training and three staff attended National Energy Action (NEA) to learn about fuel poverty and government grants to help people who are experiencing Fuel poverty. The Co-op now hope to get NEA training for a further 15 community members on Fuel Poverty/Energy saving.

In total, 140 people benefited, thanks to the hard work of 17 volunteers, and eight trained staff members.

OBJECTIVES

To educate and inform local residents about the issues surrounding fuel poverty and energy usage.

The sessions would also promote a more united community in the Highfield Area.

MORE DETAILS BOX OUT

Project title: Energy Matters - A community response to saving energy

Group name: Highfield Food Co-op

Theme: Reducing energy

Area of benefit: Bradford

Duration: 12 months