

Making your open homes event relevant and inclusive

When you're planning your open homes event, it's good to think about how you can make your event relevant and inclusive – *relevant* to people in your local community, and *inclusive* by addressing barriers that may prevent people from attending or getting involved.

This is one of a series of information sheets for community groups organising green open homes events. Find the rest at www.greenopenhomes.net

In this guide:

- Where to begin
- Designing the event
- Removing barriers for visitors
- Marketing
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Where to begin

If you want to inspire a wide range of people to make energy saving improvements to their own homes, you need your event to be relevant to their situation.

Once your group have come up with a rough idea for your event, think about these questions:

- Who is your event designed for and designed by?
- Who is benefitting from this design and likely to take part? And who might be disadvantaged or not find it relevant?
- Could you actively widen the groups included in your design? How?

Your answers may encourage you to expand your ambition, engage more of your community, and increase the impact of your group.

Designing the event

Research shows that people are more likely to take action when they see similar actions from other people like themselves. People will be more inspired to act if they can relate to the hosts, or if the homes they visit are like their own. Here are some suggestions:

Diversity of homes

Aim for a mixture of housing types: flats, terraces, detached houses, park homes etc. Diversity also includes the fuel type used, the age of the building, the construction style and so on. Quirky 'eco-homes' and new builds can be interesting and fun, but they need to be part of a good mix that represents homes in your area. A variety of

types of homes and improvements on show will help you inspire a wide range of visitors.

Diversity of tenures

Different tenure types (social housing, privately owned, privately rented, or cooperatively owned) bring with them different issues for energy efficiency and/or renewable energy improvements. It's great to have a range of situations that different visitors can be inspired by.

Diversity of homeowners

Having a variety of homeowners – for example, of different ages, incomes, life stages, cultural backgrounds, or disability – will increase the likelihood that your event feels relevant to a wide variety of people.

Diversity of improvements

Ensure there is a range of energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy technologies to see across your open homes. This will help the event cater for the breadth of visitor interests and budgets. You could also include wider measures like batteries, water use, heritage conservation, landscaping and more!

While you're thinking, see our guide *Recruiting and supporting open homes hosts*.

Removing barriers for visitors

As well as having a variety of homes, you should prepare for the needs of your visitors. It may not be possible to cater for everyone but do the best you can and respect the decisions of open homes hosts.

Getting there

How easily will people be able to visit the homes (or event hub)? Are they accessible by public transport or bike, and what parking is available? Your hosts will help you answer these questions.

Accessibility in the home

Different visitors will have different physical needs – mobility, vision, hearing, and many other things besides. You'll need to be clear about access restrictions in homes to avoid disappointed visitors. Ask hosts in advance if their homes have railings or step-free access; if they're walker, pram, or wheelchair friendly; whether they'll have toilet access; or pets. And make sure your volunteers on the day are easily visible as helpers.

You can find more practical suggestions for running accessible community events at www.makethingsaccessible.com

Cultural considerations

Think about your community and about the different needs that may arise, for example, avoiding clashing with religious, cultural or sporting events and holidays. Could you have volunteers and hosts from a mix of backgrounds? Is it worth providing flyers in more than one language? You could use the expertise of local organisations. Some will be already trying to improve the inclusivity of local events and can help you see what you've missed.

Marketing

How you market your event will affect whether people feel it is relevant to them. People are interested in energy efficiency and home improvements for a whole variety of reasons – saving money, being green, and so on – so make sure your publicity ticks lots of interest boxes or focuses on those you think are most relevant to your local community or target audience.

If you feel that you are missing a key demographic from your community, try reaching out to the movers and shakers of this demographic. For example, you may already have networks with faith leaders, school heads, sports clubs and other community groups. These community champions will have practical advice for reaching the people they work with.

Publicise clear information about each home and its accessibility, so visitors can plan which homes to visit. Clearly explain how you're catering for different needs (and be open about where you can't) and include a contact telephone number so people can get in touch.

For further advice see our resource *Marketing your event to the public*.

Monitoring and evaluation

There's always room to improve next time. We'd suggest using feedback forms to ask people what their experience was, and whether or not they felt their needs were catered for. It may be simplest to ask for anonymous feedback to encourage honest responses and avoid data protection (GDPR) issues.

Read the resource *GDPR for open homes events* for a checklist you can follow when asking for feedback.

This information sheet was produced by the Centre for Sustainable Energy. We're committed to supporting low carbon retrofit by promoting open homes events and helping you get going with resources, practical support and funding.

You can find more advice at www.greenopenhomes.net.

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