

Marketing your event to the public

You may think it's important for people to retrofit their homes, but for others in your community, this may not be a priority.

To get people through the doors of your open homes event, you'll need to think carefully about the messaging you use and draw up a simple marketing plan.

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

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Choosing your target audience

To start your marketing plan, you should be clear about your overall aim or purpose of running your open homes event. Who do you want to attend, and what do you want them to take away? For example, are you looking for as many visitors as possible? Or are you going to target a specific group, such as people likely to carry out work in their own homes, or people living in homes that are less energy efficient?

Take time to think about people in your community you may *not* be thinking of. Our guide *Making your open homes event relevant and inclusive* will help you consider this in more detail.

Being specific with your overall aim will make it easier to see what steps you need to take.

So, ask yourself about your audience:

- What age are they? Do they have the time (and possibly income) to make small or large changes to their homes?
- What kind of home are they likely to live in? How much do they know about energy efficiency?
- What are their needs and priorities? Are they motivated by saving money on energy bills, being warm and comfortable, or caring for the environment?

Think about the social networks of your target audience and picture how they might come across your event. Do they know their neighbours? Do they use the internet or social media? Are they likely to be aware of your group and its activities in the community?

Also, ask yourself what might stop your audience from coming along. How can you shape the event format to make it easy for them to decide to attend? Things like event timing, your choice of approach, the types of homes you feature and the messages you use to market the event play a big part.

What to say

Given the profile of your audience, the next step is to think about the most important messages you want to get across. What will inspire them to attend? Think about what they'd be *interested to hear*, rather than what you want to tell them!

Be very clear, keep it simple, use the right language (avoid jargon), and make it sound as easy as possible for people to get involved.

If you're struggling, you could use an AI generator to help create the perfect phrasing for your audience.

Don't forget that although you have spent a lot of time thinking about energy efficiency and carbon emissions, the people you are trying to reach may not have. Choose your emphasis on energy efficiency or carbon emissions based on your audience and goals. The wrong emphasis might miss your target.

You could check out Climate Outreach's Britain Talks Climate tips on engaging people from different demographics or incomes at: climateoutreach.org. Or, if energy saving is more relevant, our resource *Getting the experts in* suggests other organisations that could inspire your messaging.

And remember, the biggest attraction of open homes events is that most people enjoy looking around other people's homes. If some homes in your event have a 'wow factor' then it might be worth using them to promote the event. But most people will be equally curious about looking around normal homes that are similar to their own yet warmer and cheaper to run.

Here are some message examples:

Being sociable

"Come and meet your neighbours, have tea and cake, and hear about how they've improved their homes."

Saving money

"Are your bills too high? Some people in [this neighbourhood] have made home improvements that have brought down their bills; come and see how."

Being warmer

"Homes around here can be hard to keep warm, but some people in this neighbourhood have made improvements to their homes that have made them much cosier. Pop in and find out more."

Homes with 'wow factor'

"Here's a chance to see inside an eco-home" or "Check out a home built to high energy efficiency standards" or "See what a [unusual property type e.g. park home, historic home, listed building] looks like with energy-saving measures."

Find out about specific improvements ...

"We will have a wide range of home improvements on show including DIY draught-proofing, solar panels, underfloor heating, heat pumps, LED lighting..."

... and learn how they work

"Come and see energy-saving tech in action and have an opportunity to speak to experts and owners about how it works."

Save energy

"Our area has saved X amount of [carbon, money, gas etc] through energy-saving improvements so far. Want to join in?"

You could also entice with a home with a special architectural feature, an interesting history (maybe someone famous once lived there) or something to appeal to kids, like chickens in the garden.

Reaching your audience

Once you've decided what to say, you need to decide *where* to say it. Don't stick to one communication channel. A message that is reinforced across different platforms (in a leaflet and then on a poster, say) is more powerful and you will reach more people if you use several different channels.

Consider what each communication is for. What does the recipient *need to know at that stage*? You don't have to include all the information at once, but the important details are dates, times, neighbourhood, or area, and where to find out more.

A **printed leaflet** is a standard marketing tool and can be put through doors, handed out at e.g. shopping centres, or left in e.g. libraries, community centres, GP surgeries etc. Leaflets are easy to design. You could use platforms like Microsoft Office, Google Drive or Canva.

Leaflet drops are much more effective if you (or others involved in your event) deliver them personally and chat with people face-to-face.

A **poster** can be put up in people's windows, shops, pubs, public buildings etc. Keep them quite small – A3 is probably too big for many noticeboards. Design tools like Canva can make your posters look professional at low or no cost.

Local **newspapers** or local **radio stations** are interested in things going on locally and may publish a supportive story or give you a slot on air. You might also buy an advert in a local newspaper or on the radio, but these can be expensive.

Local **newsletters** are often hungry for content, but you may have to write the article yourself. You could use an AI platform to help you make your writing more polished.

Local **events** are a good place to give out leaflets and chat to people face-to-face e.g. a weekly farmers market, or one-off community event.

Social media is a great publicity tool. For example, Facebook and X are great ways to connect with individuals and organisations who will help you promote your event. And if you have budget, you can pay to advertise your event on social media through a business account. These are usually free to make, then you pay a cost per day to 'boost' your post.

Setting up a **website** from scratch can require quite a bit of resources. Is there a supportive organisation that would give you a page on their site instead? Or why not set your event up on our website: www.greenopenhomes.net

Become an enthusiastic **networker**! Other community organisations in the area may be happy to promote the event through their newsletters, neighbourhood group chats, meetings, and events.

And don't forget good old **word-of-mouth** – ask the open homes hosts to tell their friends and neighbours and spread the word.

What resources do you need?

It is important to be aware that different types of marketing require different amounts of resources including time, money, and people. Think about:

- Finance - What's your marketing budget? What will be the best use of your money?

- Time - How much time do you have for marketing? Do you have volunteers who can go door-knocking or attend local events? How long will this take?
- People – How many people can help with the project? How could you increase this number and encourage people to volunteer?
- Skills - Whose expertise do you have, and could you use? Do you know someone who can make a snazzy social media post / who is good at designing posters / who is great at talking to people?

When to start marketing?

In most cases, the sooner the better. An early start will mean you can do more and maximise your reach.

Consider drawing up a calendar of marketing actions taking you right up to the event day(s). But don't front-load your campaign; if you start advertising early, people can forget about it by the time the event comes around. A steady stream of marketing will stop people from forgetting about it and build momentum and excitement for your event.

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.

www.cse.org.uk

communities@cse.org.uk

Charity 298740

St James Court, St James Parade, Bristol BS1 3LH