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Energywise

(Vulnerable Customers and Energy Efficiency (VCEE))

Funding mechanism:	LCNF Tier 2
Project budget:	LCNF: £3.32m UK Power Networks: £0.93m Partners: £1.24m Overall: £5.49m
Status:	Live Start date: January 2014 End date: December 2017

Project concept/overview/challenge

The Energywise project aims to enable and encourage customers to change their pattern of demand and participate in demand side response (DSR) and other energy saving activities, that will help to mitigate the challenges of increasing and more uncertain demand on electricity networks. To date there has been little direct research and operational attention directed at supporting vulnerable and fuel poor customers. This group of customers can benefit considerably from the low carbon transition but have the least ability to access low carbon technology. The project will support this group and allow them to fully participate in energy saving and DSR opportunities as well as supporting Distribution Network Operators manage network reinforcement using flexible alternatives.

Stakeholder Benefits

Working with our partners, including Tower Hamlets Homes, Poplar HARCA and the Bromley by Bow Community Centre, we are investigating ways to enable fuel poor customers to realise benefits from smart metering and other technology available in a low carbon future.

What we are doing/deliverables

The project will, through the exploration of innovative partnerships, identify challenges, capture lessons learnt and develop best practise approaches to the recruitment and engagement of fuel poor customers.

To support the recruitment of trial participants we have conducted a focus group. Representative customers provided feedback on the key messages, communication material and branding planned for the project roll-out. We will continue to receive feedback from the actual trial participants through specially designed panels that will be convened regularly during the trials.

Trial 1 – Energy Efficiency
We will assess the level of energy savings that customers are able to make when they have access to smart metering solutions, simple affordable energy saving devices and energy saving advice whilst measuring the impact that any potential changes in customer demand profiles have on the electricity network.

Trial 2 – Demand side response
We will analyse the impact on the network of any demand shifting realised through the introduction of a 'time-of-use' (ToU) tariff in parallel with energy saving and load shifting activities whilst identifying the customer benefits arising from this activity.

We will share the learning and knowledge gained by the project in relation to customer engagement, customer and network benefits.

Findings/recommendations

The feedback received through our focus group activity, in relation to communication materials, key messages and branding, has helped shape the recruitment strategy for the project trials.

Next Steps

- Pilot Study – to test the customer engagement strategy developed for fuel poor customers, assess response rates and operational processes.
- Deliver our first learning report on 'Trial Design and Identification of Trial Participants' outlining the research, technical and customer design principles.
- Trial 1 recruitment campaign.
- Detailed assessment of housing stock for Multiple Dwelling Unit (MDU) Communication Infrastructure.

Partners

British Gas

CAG consultants

Institute for Sustainability

Poplar HARCA

Tower Hamlets Homes

UCL