

We recently hosted a party for more than 50 Tower Hamlets residents who took part in our flagship innovation project energywise.

The event at the Bromley by Bow Centre was a chance for us to thank some of the many local residents who had made the effort to join the project and helped us along the way. We had an energy quiz and games with prizes, as well as a children's entertainer. It was great to hear how positive they found the project and how it has benefited them. Working with the Bromley by Bow Centre as a trusted local partner, we got to know the local community by meeting them on their terms. We recruited local people from within the community to work as field officers in an area with a lot of ethnic diversity. As a result, over 500 people signed up to take part in the project and more than 250 stayed with us for three years until the very end.

When we started energywise in 2014 we wanted to learn about how energy networks could do more to help everyone share in the potential benefits of smart meters, energy efficiency devices and Time of Use tariffs. We were especially keen to get people involved in the project who were traditionally less engaged in the transition to a smart energy system and those who were potentially living in fuel poverty.

We worked with eight different organisations from community bodies and charities like National Energy Action and the Bromley by Bow Centre to a British Gas. We developed new tariffs that gave residents rewards if they shifted their energy consumption away from peak times. For many this was as simple as turning their washing machine on a bit later in the evening, or turning off lights when they weren't in the room.

The results of the project speak for themselves. As well as more than 300 smart meters installed we gave residents 2,000 energy efficiency devices including eco-kettles and LED lightbulbs. We proved that people in fuel poverty were just as likely to save energy once they had a smart meter installed as anybody else once they are engaged and receive appropriate support. And we trialled the first ever Critical Peak Rebate program in the UK to encourage people to move their electricity use away from peak times in the UK, a move which has huge potential to free up capacity on the electricity network without penalising customers at peak times.

But one of things we were most proud of was how energywise got the community talking about their electricity use. Many people said it was the first time their family had actually discussed how they could save money, when they were wasting electricity, how they could do things differently. Some of the things people at the party said to me included *'I wouldn't change a thing [about the project] –people worked hard!'* and *'Smart meters have really helped us to visualise what we are using'*.

energywise taught us a lot, but it doesn't end there. Over the course of this year we're going to be working with project partners to share the findings of the project. Without the support of local residents who got involved we wouldn't have been able to achieve any of this. And last Saturday we had the opportunity to say thank you to them for their invaluable contribution to this important project.





