

LSE Housing and Communities

**Findings from Trafford Hall
Energy Plus Tenant Think Tank
– June 2015**

CASereport 94

Trafford Hall

National Communities Resource Centre



CENTRE FOR ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION



Housing and
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Acknowledgments

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About LSE Housing and Communities

LSE Housing and Communities is a research unit within the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE) at the London School of Economics, led by Professor Anne Power. CASE is a multi-disciplinary research centre which focuses on the exploration of different dimensions of social disadvantage, particularly from longitudinal and neighbourhood perspectives, examining the impact of public policy. We aim to understand the social dynamics of disadvantaged neighbourhoods; promote models of housing and neighbourhood management; develop ways to support community and resident self-help action, especially in social housing areas; and shape government policy.

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1. Introduction

The National Communities Resource Centre at Trafford Hall exists to help residents and frontline staff in disadvantaged communities all over the country develop self-help skills and community action to tackle harsh social problems.

Since 2012, Trafford Hall has partnered with LSE Housing and Communities and the National Housing Federation to run Housing Plus, a knowledge exchange programme surrounding the work that social landlords do, and the value they add, in disadvantaged communities, over and above their core landlord role. Housing Plus consisted of eight think tanks and five roundtable briefings run over the period 2013-2015, which were attended by around 140 tenants and about 350 staff from across the country. Around 100 social landlords participated, and 60 supported their tenants to attend.

Each Housing Plus event covered a different topic affecting the social housing sector, such as energy saving, work and training, financial management and debt, community capacity and resilience. In early June 2015, Trafford Hall hosted a 24-hour tenant Thank Tank, following an Energy Plus Roundtable with policy makers, to learn more about tenants' experiences of energy saving in social housing.

All tenants at the event were encouraged and directly supported by their landlords to attend. Landlords wanted tenants to better understand the consequences of reduced energy usage on their household budgets, their properties and the environment. They also wanted tenants to understand and share experiences, and to develop practical ideas to support their communities.

Increasingly, energy saving is near the top of the agenda for social landlords, who see reducing household energy bills as a way of helping their tenants meet rent payments. Furthermore, energy efficient properties mean that tenants can live comfortably, while the properties themselves are well maintained and gain in appreciation as a result.

Social landlords have increasingly employed a twin approach. On the one hand, they are energy retrofitting their properties, investing in wall, roof and floor insulation, new windows, and new heating systems to make buildings energy efficient. On the other hand, they are working with tenants to help them change their energy use behaviour, providing them with training, information programmes, and individual support and advice. With this in mind, the objectives of the Think Tank were to better understand:

- what tenants are doing, if at all, to reduce energy costs;
- What social landlords can do, from a tenant perspective, to assist them in their endeavour to reduce energy consumption;

- How communities can generate their own energy, and what can be done to green local environments.

This report captures some of tenants' concerns, needs and experiences in terms of energy usage and saving; what tenants understand by 'energy efficiency'; how they deal with costs associated with heating their homes; and ways they find to save money on energy.

a. Who participated

The June 2015 Think Tank was attended by 47 tenants who came from all regions of the country, representing 26 social landlords (see Annex 1). Half of the participants were of working age, while the other half were over-60. They came as representatives of other tenants and their communities. One fourth had disabilities which impaired their mobility. There was a good gender mix, with 22 men and 23 women present.

There was a mix of participants, ranging from those who had never been involved or engaged with the issue of saving energy, and those who had limited knowledge of the issue, to those who were actively engaged in, and knowledgeable about, energy saving and reducing energy consumption. Quite a few were actively involved in their communities and with their landlords in dealing with the twin issues of saving energy while reducing the carbon footprint.

b. How the Think Tank was organised

Tenants were grouped around tables. Each table had a helper who had been briefed to facilitate and keep record of what was being discussed. The event comprised of six main sessions:

- What we know about heating our homes and energy saving;
- The big threat of climate change;
- How landlords can help;
- How to stop wasting energy;
- How communities can generate their own energy;
- Making our local environments green.

We collected evidence, ideas, experiences and tenants' views in the following ways:

- Notes taken at each table by helpers;
- Post-it stickers filled in individually to answer questions before and during discussions;
- "Direct Experience Forms" completed by participants, to give everyone the chance to record and explain personal experiences of energy efficiency, and to record community actions to help tenants;

- Flip charts, both at individual tables and in the centre of the room, to pool ideas, themes and practical actions;
- Posters, drawn at tables by participants, to show how tenants can save energy and reduce energy consumption.

This short report pulls together the main findings from the Think Tank, drawing on the different methods of input collected throughout the event. Annex 2 provides the full programme and the questions addressed in each session.

2. Findings

a. What we know about heating our homes and energy saving

Tenants' inability to heat their homes properly emerged as a very real problem. Participants often reported **not having enough money to adequately heat their homes** to a desired comfortable level. Tenants also **struggled to understand and navigate the energy market, and thus make informed decisions**. They expressed concern with their lack of confidence in dealing with what they perceive as very daunting issues, such as changing energy supplier in a market full of complex language surrounding tariffs; managing new technologies; and trying to decipher between possible discounts and grants. All this can prove overwhelming, and act as a hindrance to doing anything to reduce energy costs.

Tenants were concerned with climate change. Although they acknowledged—and indeed were frustrated by—the lack of government leadership on this issue of energy saving, they nonetheless recognized the **importance of starting small, working locally to effect change**. In the end, however, it was largely the **potential money savings** that can be realized from reducing energy consumption that motivated behavioural change among participants.

Oxford is a highly stratified city, with wealthy individuals living in the centre of town and lower income groups in the suburbs. These satellite residential areas largely consist of prefab housing built after the war that is highly energy inefficient. Recognising the cost of energy inefficient homes, both to the environment and tenants' energy bills, a group of GreenSquare tenants got involved in Low Carbon Oxford which is a network of organisations with a shared vision to reduce carbon emissions in Oxford by 40% by 2020. GreenSquare commissioned Low Carbon Oxford to do a study of GreenSquare tenants' energy usage. Low Carbon Oxford used infrared photography to see where heat loss in homes was occurring and which buildings are particularly energy inefficient. Resident inspectors carried out surveys with tenants on their energy use and energy bills. Low Carbon Oxford found that 45% of GreenSquare's tenants struggled to pay heating bills. Many simply turn off the heat to save money. They also found that 22% of residents got into debt over energy bills and other related housing costs. Information is now shared among residents to help save energy and tackle fuel poverty.

GreenSquare Housing Association, Oxford

Bolton at Home runs the "Keep Warm for Less" campaign. This includes training staff on issues such as fuel poverty, carbon footprint and energy efficiency (100 staff have been trained). Then there is customer training on issues such as energy efficiency, how to switch energy suppliers and discounts available. One-to-one drop in sessions are run across five sites throughout Bolton that cover issues such as switching energy suppliers, how to read fuel bills, how to manage fuel debt-sorting out immediate debt and making referrals, what energy efficiency means, how to adjust and work heating controls and thermostats etc., dealing with pre-payment meters, damp and condensation. Bolton also offers a Home Visit service; in six months staff met with over 120 customers. Bolton has managed to increase disposable income and savings up to £15,000; they have referred £30,000 worth of debt to the debt management team; they have trained over 100 customers; and 220 customers have experienced energy efficiency savings.

Bolton at Home

One of the topics of discussion was **what an energy efficient home looks like**. It was noted that 'leaky homes' can be made warm by adding layers of insulation, draught proofing and triple glazing windows. It is similar to putting a tea cosy over a warm pot of tea. The most heat is lost via walls (30%), the roof (25%) and windows (40%), and then through draughts and doors. Thanks to the 'tea cosy' effect, warmcel insulation, wool insulation, draught proofing and expanding foam can all reduce drafts and the ability for wind to whirl through a home. Those are the **structural challenges**, but there are tenant **behavioural challenges** as well. Most individuals, for example, overheated their homes by six degrees. Heating a home at 18 degrees is a comfortable temperature, and would substantially reduce costs compared to heating a home at 24 or 25 degrees.

Orbit's Energy Efficiency Renovation Programme is an energy retrofitting initiative aimed to bring the whole stock up to an EPC rating of C or above by 2020. Orbit is using the idea of Energy Sprung—the concept of a 'tea cozy' on a house. Orbit has found that insulation techniques are the most cost-effective. Orbit has set up an Energy Advice Clinic to help assess and understand tenants' needs that include helping tenants to switch tariffs. In addition, Orbit has designed a computer game that encourages energy saving. This has proven a good way to engage tenants with the issue of energy saving and has helped tenants understand what energy saving means.

Orbit Housing

Hull has started a Gas Awareness scheme. Ten people won the gas award scheme. At present Hull is insulating commercial areas and flats as well as doing exterior wall cladding and putting in energy efficient windows. Siemens is currently setting up a windfarm for clean energy.

Hull City Council Tenant

b. What are the big issues in heating our homes?

Tenants discussed energy saving issues that made them sad, angry and frustrated, as opposed to those that made them happy, proud and optimistic. As Table 1 shows, tenants mentioned four main issues that made them feel sad, angry or frustrated:

1. The **lack of confidence in being able to understand the issues surrounding energy usage and efficiency**. They found it difficult to understand utility companies pricing information, which is needed in order to make informed decisions about changing suppliers. They would like to be able to better comprehend discounts or grants that may be available to low-income residents to help them reduce their energy bills. Tenants were also still unclear and uncertain how to work thermostats, read smart meters or manage any new technology installed in their flats.
2. The fact that **utility bills are too high**. Tenants were angry that the energy companies hold a monopoly on setting prices that benefit their shareholders but no one else. They would like to see caps on pricing, or at least reduced tariffs on offer.
3. The fact that **too many were still living in uninsulated flats and homes**. Some tenants expressed frustration at poorly installed retrofit jobs—'jobs done on the cheap'—or incomplete jobs that resulted in, for example, double glazed windows and insulated walls installed in one flat, but the patio door remaining single glazed.
4. That **we live in an age where people are forced to choose between heating or eating**—that, as one tenant participant noted, '21st century hypothermia still exists'. Tenants related either their own experience or the experience of a neighbour or friend they knew, who had been forced to heat only one room, sleep without heat, fill hot water bottles or put layers on just to stay warm, and cut down on food so that they could pay the gas bill.

This was considered to be an intolerable situation for anyone, but especially for the elderly, ill and/or disabled who suffer disproportionately from cold homes.

Table 1: What makes you sad, angry, and frustrated about energy issues?

| Issue | No. of times mentioned (8 tables) |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Lack of access to information on discounts and/or grants; lack of understanding and confidence in how to use equipment; inconsistencies with updates; poorly run energy company call centres | 14 |
| Cost of utility bills; profits made by energy companies not being re-invested in communities; being reliant on one fuel source—not enough competition in the market | 9 |
| Uninsulated homes; retrofitting done on the cheap; restrictions on self-improvement; double glazed windows that do not work | 7 |
| Heat or eat; poor people pay more, i.e., prepayment meters | 7 |
| Lack of legislation and regulation | 1 |

When asked about what generally made them happy, proud and optimistic, tenants raised 24 issues. As Table 2 shows, the top three themes were:

- **Tenants felt that they were ‘all in it together’**, and as a result of changes being made by themselves and their landlords, they derived a sense of community. They were happy to seek out, be a part of, or spearhead initiatives in the community that would result in changes for everyone - be it planting an orchard, turning a derelict space into a green space, planting gardens, or helping neighbours understand issues surrounding energy consumption and savings. Taking part in these initiatives is an empowering experience for tenants: it gives them a sense of ‘people power’, that the ability to change is in their control.
- **Those whose homes were energy retrofitted were generally very happy about the impact these changes had on their lives**, both in terms of reduced energy bills and being more comfortable in their homes. Tenants noted that smart meters, combi-boilers, exterior wall cladding schemes, solar panels, air source heating, upgrades to doors, windows and interior insulation all had a positive effect on their comfort, and reduced their energy bills.
- **Tenants were happy about the support they were receiving from their landlords**, the feeling that ‘someone is on our side’. They appreciated the training and information sessions provided to them by their landlords. They were feeling a renewed sense of enthusiasm for their homes and their communities, and this was because of the

investment being made by their landlords in upgrading the properties and helping tenants understand what the changes would mean to them.

Table 2: What makes you happy, proud and optimistic?

| Issue | No. of times mentioned (8 tables) |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Community energy initiatives; level of resident involvement improving; training/information sessions; awareness of energy issues | 6 |
| Support, 'someone is on our side'; 'all in it together'; opportunity to remind landlords of social purpose and hold them to account; | 6 |
| Smart meters; combi-boilers; exterior wall cladding schemes; and air source heating being installed | 5 |
| New builds; repairs being made to properties; upgrading lofts, doors, windows, walls | 4 |
| Warm home discount/winter fuel payments/cold weather payments | 2 |
| Landlords taking notice, making changes; times are changing, progress is being made | 2 |
| Wind turbines and C.H.P generators; solar panels | 2 |
| A more comfortable, happy life; doctors noticing health improvements as a result of energy retrofits | 2 |

c. What can tenants do to reduce their energy consumption?

Tenants discussed multiple ways in which they could reduce their energy consumption in order to reduce their energy bills (see Table 3). Perhaps one of the most striking features of this conversation were the number of participants who felt that putting on an extra layers of clothing, knitting wool sweaters and/or using a hot water bottle on a regular basis was a good way to stay warm while reducing their energy bills. This suggested that people were uncomfortable in their homes, that they were either not able to heat their homes to an agreeable standard because they did not have the money to pay the fuel bills, or that even if they were able to pay the fuel bills, their home was draughty, and thus they were never completely warm and comfortable no matter the temperature.

Tenants suggested a number of other ways they cut down on their energy consumption. A lot were **small, common sense ideas that have the effect of making a larger impact when combined**. These included: switching off appliances when not in use; only boiling the necessary amount of water for tea; and only washing and drying with full loads. Another suggestion was to adjust the radiators in each room according to the amount one was in them. But here tenants cited challenges with properties that only have a central thermostat that does not allow tenants

to adjust the heat in each room. Those who had valves on radiators suggested that people could purchase these for a nominal cost and install them. This would allow them to adjust radiators individually.

Table 3: How tenants can reduce energy consumption

| Issue | No. of times mentioned (8 tables) |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Switch off all appliances not in use; turn down thermostat; use only necessary amount of water (i.e., for brushing teeth, taking shower, boiling cup of tea); install LED lights; wash/dry only a full load of clothes | 18 |
| Walk/cycle instead of driving or do a car share; live in a houseboat; compost food stuffs; recycle | 8 |
| Set up an advice group/share information on saving energy | 6 |
| Wear an extra layer; use a hot water bottle; leave oven door open after baking to warm kitchen; install heavy, thermal curtains | 6 |
| Use a smart meter; switch energy supplier | 2 |

It became apparent that the challenge was getting tenants to make changes in their daily habits and routines that would result in reduced energy consumption. Tenants are sometimes reluctant to change their energy use habits for a number of reasons, therefore it is important to use **innovative ways to engage them with local energy issues**. Here the **“power of a friendly face”** can help. It has been found that peer support and advice from other residents or neighbours can be more beneficial than advice from experts and professionals who are not known by the community.

An example was cited of a small village in the Lake District where local **residents went door-to-door to discuss with their neighbours ways to save energy**. Out of the 800 homes in the village, 300 participated. The local volunteers visited their neighbours’ homes and asked questions about their energy usage, and then discussed ways they could reduce their consumption. The volunteers then followed up at a later period, and learned that the majority of participants had taken on what they had learnt from the initial meeting. They found that this type of local approach had the benefit of forging bonds amongst neighbours, as they got to know them in their homes and would then run into them in the village. It turned out to be a very natural, organic and successful way for the community to engage with the issue of reducing energy consumption.

Affinity Sutton set up a Facebook page providing energy saving advice. The top three tips included:

- 1. Make sure to put a full load in the washing machine and tumble dryer;*
- 2. Do not over fill the kettle;*
- 3. Be aware of the huge amount of energy expended by electric fires; and*
- 4. Do not put towels on the radiator and then turn up the heat because it can cause an electrical fire and wastes electricity that is costly.*

Affinity Sutton video recorded Phil presenting his tips, and the video is now available to view on the Affinity Sutton website and Facebook page.

Phil Ward, Affinity Sutton

d. What can social landlords do to help tenants reduce their energy consumption?

Tenants cited two main things that social landlords could do to help them reduce their energy consumption (see Table 4):

- First, **comprehensive energy retrofits to their homes**. This include, ideally, triple glazed windows, loft and wall insulation, new boiler systems and, where possible, solar panels.
- Secondly, having a **full-time on-site energy advisor** to provide guidance and information about how to switch suppliers, understand energy bills, and how to work the technology installed in their homes.

An important discussion arose during this session as to whether tenants should be allowed to opt-out of any or all energy retrofitting work done to their rental property. Tenant participants were split on this issue, with some arguing that tenants should not be able to opt out, and others taking a more nuanced position. Ultimately, it became apparent that it was about **communication between the tenants and the social landlords**. Indeed, this is relevant not only to the issue of opting out, but in every aspect. It is vital that tenants feel that they have a means to effectively and meaningfully communicate with their social landlords, that their voices will be heard, and that their opinions and suggestions will be taken into consideration. **It is important that communication between tenants and social landlords remains open and fluid**. Change for some can be daunting and overwhelming, but if the time is taken by the social landlord to include tenant voices in the planning process, then barriers can be broken and progress can be made. This should go hand-in-hand with explaining and working with tenants about the changes that will happen to their properties, and the long-term benefits this will have to their homes and lifestyles.

Table 4: How social landlords can help tenants reduce energy consumption

| Issue | No. of times mentioned (8 tables) |
|--|--|
| Double loft and cavity wall insulation; insulated flooring; draught excluder | 10 |
| Double or triple glazing | 6 |
| Solar panels | 5 |
| Full-time energy advisor/provide on-site information | 4 |
| Water butt | 3 |

e. Making local environments green

The Think Tank also explored how communities could generate their own energy and green their local environment. Tenants noted that one way communities could achieve these goals would be by **setting up a social enterprise using renewal energy**.

Installing solar PV was identified as one area of potential investment. Many tenants had experience of their social landlord installing solar panels, which resulted in drastically reducing their electricity bills. Community organisations could work with their social landlord and/or council to set up **solar PV schemes as social enterprises** that would have multiple benefits for the community. The benefits would include:

- Local investment in large scale schemes that have the potential to create jobs and apprenticeships for young people in the community;
- Investment in social enterprises means that earnings can be diversified, allowing the community to take on new issues that support the community through multiple ways;
- Social enterprises using renewal energy have the benefit of doing something to reduce energy consumption for the community, by the community. It was noted that too often central government does not understand the needs of rural communities, and up to now the only government scheme to help households to reduce energy has been the Green Deal, which does not work for communities.

Sovereign Housing is a member of the Hampshire Panel that meets biannually. Sovereign Housing has a Warmer Homes Strategy. The strategy is to help vulnerable tenants by providing them with energy savings advice. This also proves to be a good opportunity to get tenants engaged with the community about environmental issues that affect their neighbourhoods.

Sovereign Housing

Set up a team of Energy Advisors in partnership with Energy Angles. The group received a grant to have loft and cavity wall insulation installed, solar PV and an air source heat pump in high rise properties installed. They are currently investigating the possibility of installing a biomass boiler. It is important for tenants to communicate with housing associations and to ask them about what more can be done. For example, tenants from Chevin Housing Association worked with architects on the renewable design of properties that have helped tenants save money while also ensuring that properties were designed to meet tenants' needs.

Chevin Housing Association

Tenants discussed the **challenges of making a community greener**. Tenants noted that even when space is not available, **there are lots of ways to bring green into a community**. For example, plants and vegetables can be grown on balconies, or in hanging baskets and flower boxes. Rooftops are also very good places to set up flower and vegetable allotments.

If space is available, then it is ideal to grow fruit, vegetables and fresh herbs in public gardens. Creating **community gardens** is a great way to engage residents—particularly the young and the old. It provides tenants with the option to participate in their community while learning about the environment. Schemes to share fruit and vegetables enable ways to cut down on grocery costs while creating a space for people to sit and relax. Community gardens are a great way to educate people of all ages on how to grow locally and cook with fresh, local ingredients.

But there are challenges too. Time, effort, money and motivation are needed to create and maintain such spaces. Councils have funded commercial gardens which have benefitted the community, **but too often they rely on volunteer help** which can be problematic when there are not enough volunteers to maintain the garden. Keeping gardens tidy by continuously removing weeds can be an on-going challenge. Moreover, it is a question of who is expected to maintain green spaces on housing association property. Tenants gave examples of several garden projects where over time volunteers lost interest or realized it was too much work. Tenants also highlighted the tricky politics of maintaining community garden projects. Working together as a community can be difficult. Some spoke of projects that caused tension between people who have fallen out with each other over the project. Others said that there are people who completely take over and want the project for themselves.

Moreover, frontline staff who have helped organise and monitor community garden projects have seen their hours cut, and are now unable to properly support these kinds of creative projects. Thus while volunteering is a good idea, it is important to have, where possible, an on-site staff member whose responsibility it is to oversee such projects, to ensure that they are maintained and that tenant volunteers are held accountable to the project.

Tenants also liked the idea of creating **food compost schemes**, though it was noted that residents have to be well informed about which types of foods can be composted or not.

Peter wanted to improve the garden at his property in Birmingham. He obtained permission from his housing association to attend a gardening course at Trafford Hall. With the knowledge he gained at the training course he obtained funding from Trafford Hall to develop a community garden. The city council heard of what was happening and offered a small grant to create a composting scheme. He subsequently received a grant from the council to purchase a horticultural shredder for compost. He turned to the Green Economics Institute as a resource for helping to set up the project.

Birmingham EMB

3. Personal testimonies

a. Individual stories

Throughout the discussions we asked tenants to write down individual experiences of saving energy that they wanted to share. Participants were anxious for their own words to be heard, so we present a selection of testimonies that set out clearly the way the cost of energy affects people's lives, and what measures they are taking to reduce energy consumption and thus costs.

Tips for reducing energy

A tip with using a tumble dryer: if you put a dry towel in with the load it halves the drying time.

[Sovereign, 30-50, female]

*Energy saving: What I am doing: self-boiling water (only use what is needed); cooking - if using oven, cook more than one meal; turn off boiler when not needing water (can save £2/week - single person, 1 bed flat, no ailments). What Birmingham City Council is doing: Solar panel installation programme; cavity wall insulation programme; "district heating" programme - small scale - initial cost patterns rectified; energy assessment leaflets. **[Anonymous]***

Questions/concerns on heating

Radiators too small for the size of the room. Only ⅓ of the room warms up and then the heat is cancelled out by the unheated ⅔! **[Cobalt Housing, 50-60, female]**

My thermostat is in the hall. There are no heating controls on the individual radiators. How can I heat my bedroom to 18 degrees and 22 degrees in the lounge? My lounge windows are double glazed but the patio door is only single glazed. There is usually condensation on the inside of the door. How can I deal with this problem? Instructions are not given to new tenants re: how to operate your heating system. Some people do not have previous knowledge. Should be in picture form as not everyone can read and some people can read but not English. **[Watford Community Housing, over 60, female]**

Our landlord has a community switch and buying project that all tenants may participate in. They also are progressing with cavity wall insulation and loft insulation. [...] Personally I cook for two days at one day and freeze the other half, leave cooker door open whilst it is cooling down, warm chair and bed up with hot water bottles. After being diagnosed with hypothyroidism soon discovered a side effect is intolerance to cold. I approached all of the energy companies to see if they allowed a reduced rate for such cases. The reply was that if I did not receive income support or disability allowance I could not claim any heating cost support. So I continually struggle to keep warm with blankets, more clothes and hot water bottles. **[East Riding of Yorkshire Council, over 60, female]**

What tenants and landlords are doing to increase energy efficiency

Changed supplier for gas and electric from British Gas to Utilita using a smart meter. Found I am saving on both gas and electricity, do not know how much as yet, just changed. The smart meters also help the less well-off by not cutting gas and electricity off from 4:00 in the afternoon until 10:00 next morning and at weekends from 4:00 on Friday until 10:00 on Monday. **[Chevin Housing, over 60, male]**

The landlord (council) has an ongoing policy to improve the means of preventing heat loss in its housing stock (11,500+ homes). It achieves this by the installation of insulation, both in attics and in wall cavities. There is also a programme to replace double glazed windows and PVC doors. Additionally, it has embarked on a fuel supply system (Yorswitch) whereby suppliers are invited to bid on the supply of low cost fuel, these savings are passed on to member tenants. **[East Riding of Yorkshire, over 60, male]**

All low energy bulbs, don't trust thermostats – I do manually, new low energy washing machine, fridge freezer, gas cooker, foil behind radiators, water meter, never leave lights on, no running

water, caution on leaving windows open/shut, lined curtains (thermal), don't fill kettle, always filling washing machine, turn off all standby lights, car sharing, leave oven door open after cooking, share information with neighbours, friends, family. Landlord: comb boiler, double glazing, loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, security lights by thermostats and shower. Long time between refurbishes – full and partial, solar panels (where practical), WT.T Hatch insulation “on top”. Together Housing Group has approximately 50 props from 1 bed flats, 2 bed bungalow, flat and houses, 3 bed flat, bungalows and houses, some four/five bed. [Chevin and Pennine Housing, over 60, male]

Octavia has several projects on-going; new builds and updates of their older buildings. They are not perfect but they are working very hard to make big changes, including tenants as much as possible. I'm lucky to be in one of their new builds which has really cut down all my bills as we have solar power, our own internal generator, smart meters and better layout with larger space. The grounds are really nice too and tenants can grow part of the gardens for themselves. We have planted communal herb beds and some flowers. [...] I'm very happy with my housing organisation. [Octavia Housing, 30-50, female]

Community initiatives

Watford has a Nifty Fifty group who arrange social events for all people over 50 - small charge. Also events are arranged for older people - tai-chi, bowls, tea dances, etc. Transport is in place - no charge. Involved and supportive to food banks and credit unions. A very good “community” housing trust. [Watford Community Housing, over 60, female]

Communitree planted in local park instead of Christmas tree outside the park as funding had been cut, thus making a huge saving each year. Old tree for Christmas costing £2000 with lights on. The Communitree is also to be used for different events, e.g. Christmas, Easter, schools, Poppy Day, e.g. stars and hearts with people's wishes/dreams written on them and tied to the fence around the tree to mark occasions, bringing all the community together, thus creating a wish tree giving people a sense of belonging. [Crosby Housing Association, over 60, female]

We have a community green space within one of our local churches. Until a few years ago, this land was unused. A local group called Greenfingers decided to turn this land into something useful. They made raised beds and grew flowers that encouraged butterflies and bees, vegetables and many other flowers. They also built a greenhouse and grow grapes and other hot house fruits. This garden is available for all groups to visit and take vegetables away. Any unused veggies get sent to food banks. They also make wine with the grapes! [Cobalt Housing, 50-60, female]

Problems

My windows are no good as I can hear the traffic which is really loud and they must be losing heat out as well. They have been double glazed but they needed to be done and they seemed to be in a hurry. [Green Square, 50-60, female]

Council put roofing felt in attic – wall cavity done; Riverside put double glazed windows in 9 years ago, not very good, draft coming through. Put combi boiler in for radiators, took gas fire out, put electric fire in—useless—only for show – if there was a power failure, there would be no heat (radiators, fire, cooker). If tenants were all electric, in a winter with hard frost, disaster. Lack of communication between tenants and social landlord. [Riverside, over 60, male]

Recycle

In discussion we have all found that each of us have different recycling schemes. Surely, there should be one national standard, instead of multiple excess coloured bins, with no common theme as to colour/content. Life would be so much easier. [Wolverhampton Homes, 50-60, male]

I have been involved in growing vegetables and fruit since I was a child (nearly 50 years). In the 1960s I got involved in green issues and live by this. I recycle and upcycle as much as possible. Almost everything has another use. I grow blackberries, rhubarb, strawberries, apples, grapes, potatoes, onions, shallots, chives, garlic, carrots, turnip, chard, turnips, parsnips, cauliflowers, cabbages, gooseberries, various herbs, lettuce, cucumbers, courgettes, tomatoes, beans, peas, melons, sprouts. From the end of June, until about the end of November, we become veggies. I have chickens and supply eggs to the local community. I freeze some veg, make chutneys and jams, and make wine. We have a wood burner. The local school let us take fallen wood. This helps us and saves them the cost of a tree surgeon. I collect children's clothes and wash and sort into sizes and distribute among the community. This is all saving money and reducing the carbon imprint. [Bolton at Home, over 60, female]

Issues concerning fuel poverty

My interest is in trying to ascertain to what degree fuel poverty contributes to evictions. How can an association help, giving all tenants a level playing field regarding fuel costs and insulation/energy efficiency, maximising their ability to pay rent. [Chevin, 50-60, female]

The poorest, as well as other vulnerable people, pay the most for their energy as key card meter charges are higher. Those who do not have access to the internet for whatever reason cannot benefit from reduced charges for paper-free billing, or use comparison websites to change providers. Those without bank accounts and the facility to set up direct debits/standing orders. At home I always switch off/disconnect TV etc., only fill the kettle with enough water, cook in

batches, make more one pot meals, keep the radiators in my hall and kitchen off. **[Hyde Housing Association, over 60, female]**

What social landlords can do to help tenants

It is good that Trafford Hall has energy saving mechanisms in place and that it advertises the fact so that tenants (on a smaller scale) follow some of the ideas. Housing providers can also bring some of the ideas into their business plans. It is good that Trafford Hall leads by example. **[Cobalt Housing, 50-60, female]**

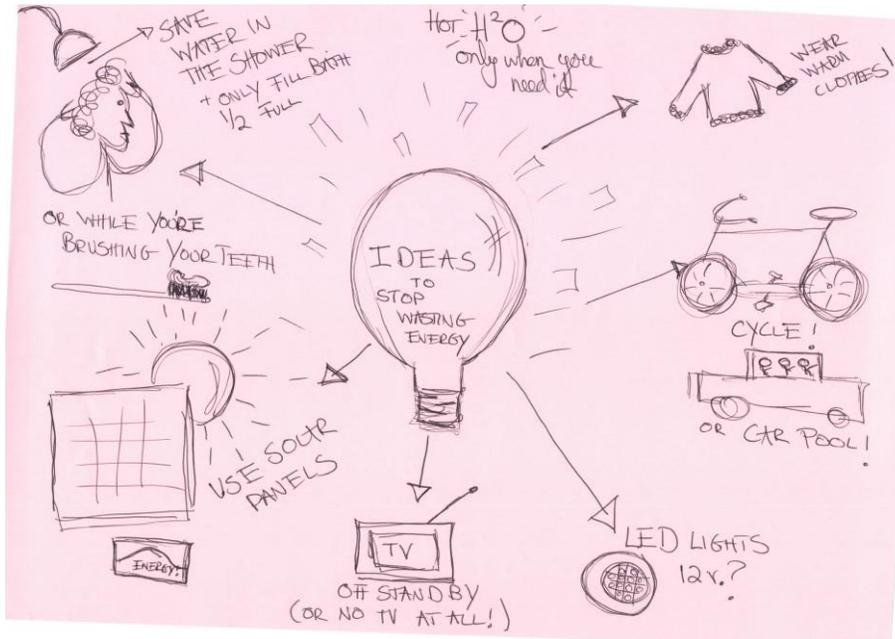
Seminars such as these could be held at each housing association - educating and advising tenants on how to reduce fuel bills. **[Watford Community Housing, over 60, female]**

Each council/ALMO/housing association etc. should set up a show home as an expo that demonstrates to all tenants/owners, private or public, all eco-technologies available and capable of demonstrating those technologies and arranging potential installation. **[Wolverhampton Homes, 50-60, male]**

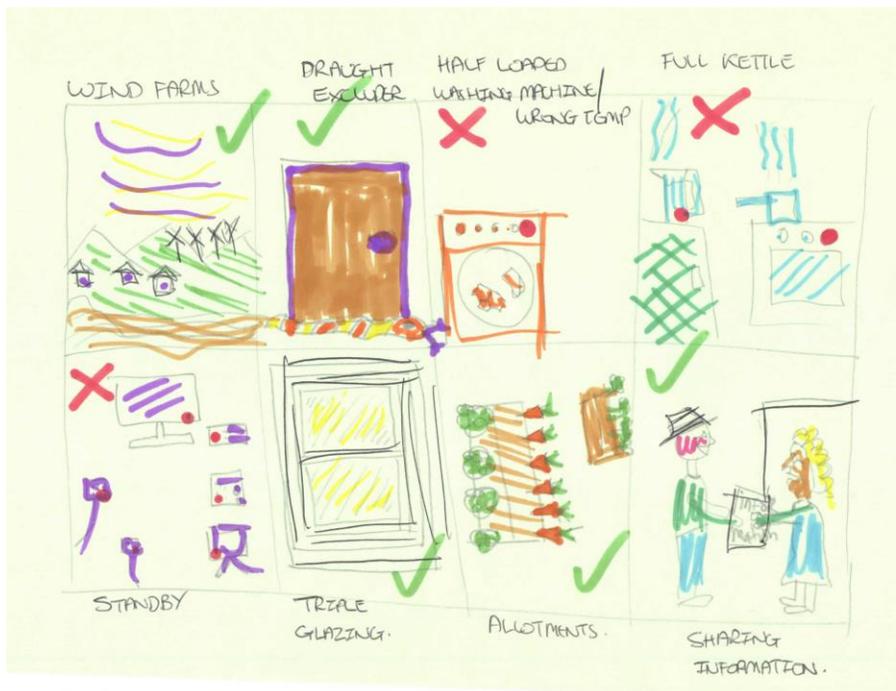
b. Community posters

We asked participants to design posters that communicated what could or should be done to reduce energy consumption and energy bills. From a total of 29 posters we selected the following:

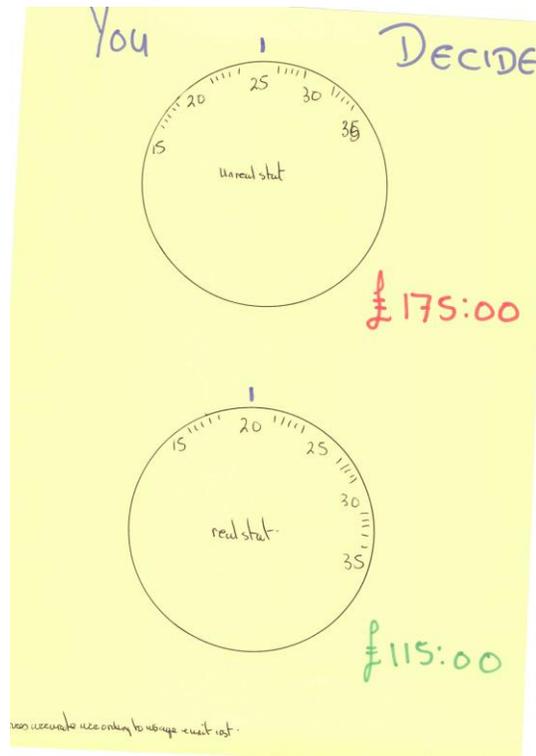
Community Poster 1: Ideas to stop wasting energy



Community Poster 2: Do's and Don'ts



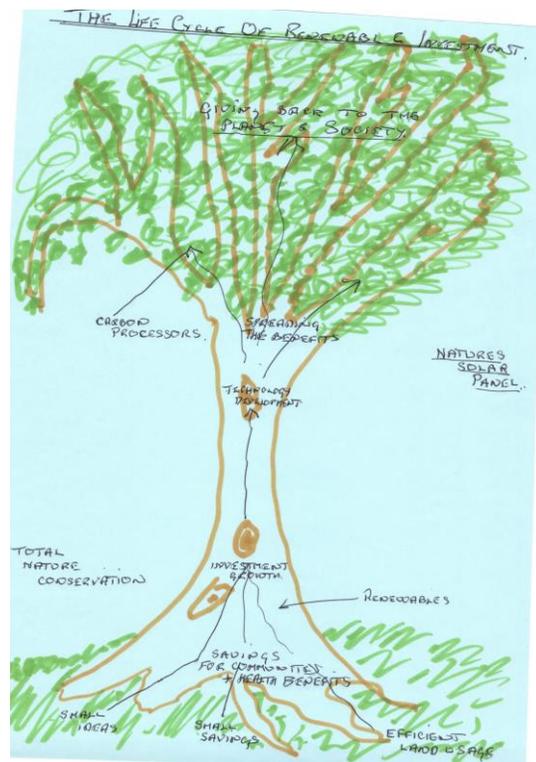
Community Poster 3: You Decide



Community Poster 4: Allotment



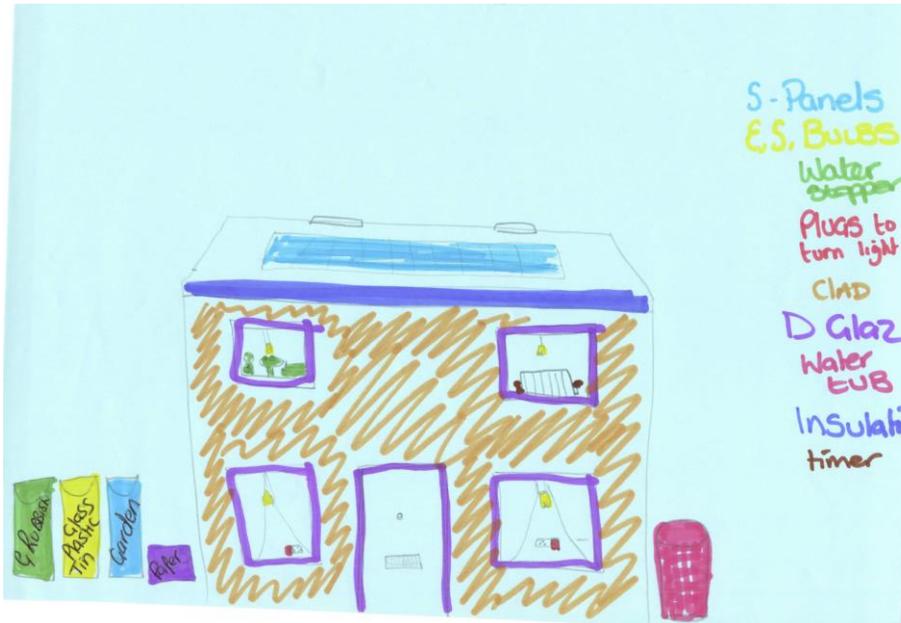
Community Poster 5: The Life Cycle of Renewable Investment



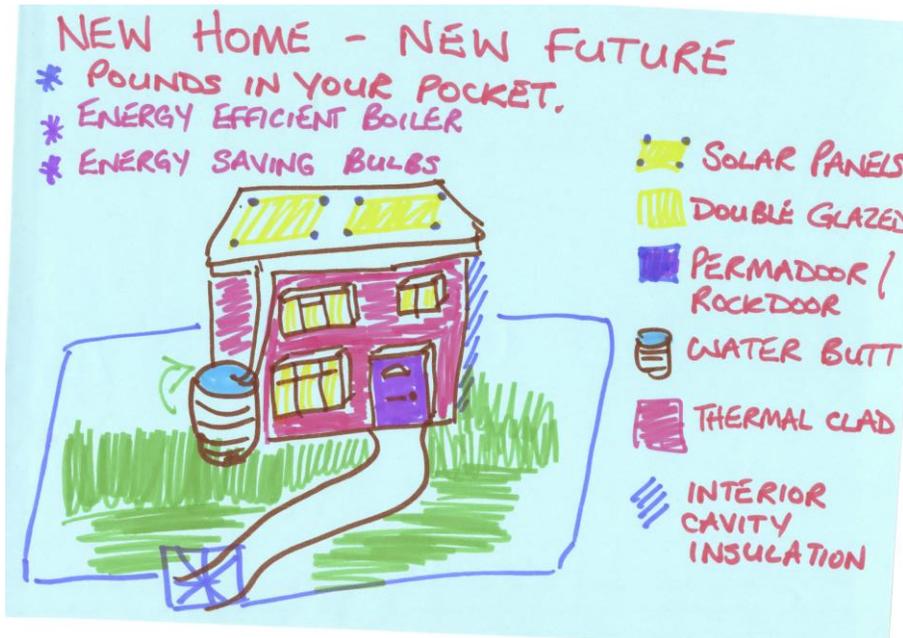
Community poster 6: Think Energy



Community Poster 7: The Eco House



Community Poster 8: New Home – New Future



Community Poster 9: Bills Or Food?

IDEAS

BILLS OR FOOD

NEED MORE MONEY?

 YOUR BILL

REDUCE ENERGY IN YOUR HOME

 YOUR LUNCH

LESS OUTLAY ← → MORE TO SPEND

ARRANGE FOR A VISIT

Community Poster 9: Ideas to save energy at home

ANITA INCOMMUNITIES

IDEAS

AT HOME



DRAFT EXC. DOORS

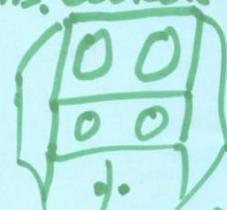
KEEP INTERNAL DOOR CLOSED

LED LIGHTS COOKER
TURN LIGHTS OFF



KETTLE

ONLY BOIL WHAT U NEED



SMALL PAN
" HOB
LGE PAN
HOB

SOLAR PANELS



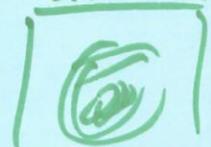
LOFT INSULATION



TIN FOIL RADIATORS.



CLOSE CURTAINS
TUCK UP ON WINDOWS



WASHER

LOW TEMP.
FULL LOAD



SAVE COLD WATER
(before hot water comes)
USE FOR TOILET FLUSH!!



ENERGY SAVING LIGHT BULBS

IN THE COMPLEX

MOTION DETECTOR LIGHTING WITH SAFTY LOW LIGHTING

4. Summary of findings

- 1. Money always matters:** Although tenants are concerned about the environment and reducing their carbon footprint, what matters in the end are the savings gained. It is the potential to save on energy bills that ultimately prompts tenants to change their behaviour.
- 2. Tenants are concerned and want to be engaged, but more help is needed to help them navigate the complexities of the energy supply market and deal with new technologies:** While there were a range of tenants present—from those actively engaged in community and/or estate projects to reduce energy consumption, to those with little knowledge of the issue – the majority were interested in the topic and wanted to do more. What was evident by the end of the Think Tank was the heightened level of interest in, and desire to communicate to their social landlords back home, what the tenants had learned. These issues are immediate and pertinent to their lives, and if it had not been clear at the beginning, it was clear to all of the tenants by the end of the Think Tank. However, several factors impede their ability to move forward. These include a lack of confidence in dealing with energy issues such as not knowing how to switch home energy suppliers; lack of understanding in how to use heating systems; and failure to understand publicised discount offers.
- 3. Tenants are frustrated:** High cost of energy prices, the perceived monopoly energy companies have on setting prices, and central government's inability to do anything about it are participants' main source of frustration with the current status of energy efficiency policy.
- 4. Tenants are hopeful:** The fact that people are joining together on estates and in communities to address ways to reduce energy consumption gives hope to participants that all is not lost. Moreover, participants are happy to see their social landlords spearheading initiatives to energy retrofit their flats and homes, and see this as a positive step both in assisting tenants reduce energy bills and in reducing the overall carbon footprint.
- 5. Starting small matters:** Participants discussed ways in which they are changing behaviour, such as turning off appliances, boiling only the necessary amount of water in the kettle for a cup of tea, and washing and drying clothing with full loads. Tenants acknowledge that reducing energy consumption on a global scale can appear an overwhelming task, but when they focus on the day-to-day small step they can me, they feel in a position to make a change. Here community matters. It is the ability and the opportunity to learn from one another on the estate and/or in the community that helps to prompt behavioural change, and provides participants with a sense of overall accomplishment.

6. Starting small matters, but landlords need to play a bigger role: While participants acknowledged the benefits of making small changes to help reduce both energy consumption and energy bills, they did discuss the need for more work to be done by social housing landlords and local councils. Many participants currently participate in volunteer driven schemes to green derelict plots of land, create community gardens or educate local residents on energy use and savings. But this work cannot be done by volunteers alone. There needs to be more joining up of residents, social landlords and councils to bring small projects to scale. The clear message that came out of the Think Tank was that, as always, the best results happen when tenants and social landlords work together to reduce energy consumption in order to increase energy savings. One side cannot succeed without the other.

7. Social landlords are spearheading energy retrofits to properties, but changes need to be more comprehensive and have to be properly explained: Participants are appreciative of changes made to their properties. Yet for some, the challenges lie in retrofits not always being comprehensive or properly installed. For example, several participants noted that while retrofits to their properties included insulated walls, new heating systems and windows, items like the front door and/or patio door with single paned windows were not replaced. Participants would like to see more comprehensive changes made that do not result in savings in one area but not the other. Also, there is still a major disconnect between changes made and tenants understanding of how to use the technology or how to properly heat their homes. Participants still do not know at what temperature to set radiators in different rooms, or how to use their new heating system. This lack of information and/or understanding is still a major barrier to maximizing energy retrofit measures done to a property.

Annexes

Annex 1: Housing organisations represented at Energy Plus Tenant Think Tank June 2015

| Landlord/Organisation | Location | Region |
|--|----------------|---------------|
| Nottingham Community Housing Association | Nottingham | Midlands |
| East Riding of Yorkshire Council | Yorkshire | North |
| Octavia | London | London |
| Hyde Group | Peterborough | East |
| Rooftop Housing Group | Worcestershire | Midlands |
| L&Q | London | London |
| Hull City Council | Hull | North |
| Places for People | Manchester | North West |
| Curo-Group | Bath | South West |
| Chevin Housing and Pennine Housing | Wakefield | North East |
| Cobalt Housing | Liverpool | North West |
| GreenSquare | Oxford | South East |
| Incommunities | Shipley | North West |
| Affinity Sutton | Manchester | North West |
| Liverpool Housing Trust | Liverpool | North West |
| Gentoo Sunderland | Sunderland | North East |
| Bloomsbury EMB | Birmingham | West Midlands |
| Watford Community Housing Trust | Watford | South East |
| Mid Devon Homes | Tiverton | South West |
| Wolverhampton Home | Wolverhampton | West Midlands |
| Orbit | Warwickshire | Midlands |
| Bron Afon Community Housing | Cwmbran | Wales |
| Bolton at Home | Bolton | North West |
| Sovereign | Portsmouth | South |
| Crosby Housing Association | Liverpool | North West |
| Riverside | Carlilse | North |

Annex 2: Energy Plus Tenant Think Tank programme and session notes

a. Programme

Monday 1st June

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 15.30 – 16.00 | Registration and refreshments |
| 16.00 – 16.30 | Session 1: Getting to know each other and Trafford Hall |
| 16.30 – 17.30 | Session 2: What we know about heating our homes and energy saving |
| 17.30 – 18.15 | Session 3: Energy saving walkabout/information session for mobility impaired |
| 18.15 – 18.30 | Free time |
| 18.30 – 19.30 | Dinner |
| 19.30 – 21.00 | Fun energy-saving quiz with prizes! |

Tuesday 2nd June

| | |
|---------------|--|
| 8.00 – 9.00 | Breakfast |
| 9.00 – 9.10 | Welcome back and warm up for the day |
| 9.10 - 9.30 | Session 4: The big threat of climate change |
| 9.30 – 10.30 | Session 5: How landlords can help |
| 10.30 – 11.00 | Break and refreshments |
| 11.00 – 12.00 | Session 6: How to stop wasting energy |
| 12.00 – 12.20 | Session 7: How communities can generate their own energy |
| 12.20 – 12.30 | Round up of the morning |
| 12.30 – 13.30 | Lunch |
| 13.30 – 14.30 | Session 8: Making our local environments green |
| 14.30 – 15.30 | Session 9: Brainstorm, top ideas and round-up |
| 15.30 | End |

b. Session notes

Session 2: What we know about heating our homes and energy saving

- ❖ Introduction: Anne Power
- ❖ Questions to address:
 - What are the big issues in heating our homes?
 - Why is energy saving important?
 - Leaky homes vs. retrofit
 - How high are energy bills?
 - Fuel poverty and who it affects

Session 3: Energy saving walkabout / information session for mobility-impaired

- ❖ Introduction
- ❖ Tour of TH's energy saving measures with Jon and Anthony – 2 groups
- ❖ For those that don't want to / can't walk about Anne Power will do a session in the ballroom on Trafford Hall's energy saving measures

Session 4: The big threat of climate change

- ❖ Introduction: Anne Power
- ❖ Questions to address:
 - How will climate change affect you and your community?
 - Why is there an urgent need to stop climate change?
 - What can we do about helping people heat their homes?
 - What can we do about waste?

Session 5: How landlords can help

- ❖ Introduction: Anne Power
- ❖ Questions to address:
 - Is your landlord doing anything about energy saving?
 - How high are your energy bills?
 - What things make the biggest difference to tenants?
 - What are landlords not doing?
 - How can landlords and tenants help vulnerable people?
 - Are there any renewable energy schemes where you live, e.g. solar panels?
 - How can landlords pay for energy saving? Can they afford it?
 - Can landlords add in energy saving measures whilst doing repairs?
 - Should energy saving be a higher priority than, for example, fitting a new kitchen?
 - What 'smart technologies' are you aware of?

Session 6: How to stop wasting energy

- ❖ Introduction: Becky Willis
- ❖ Questions to address:
 - What do we do what wastes most energy?
 - What cheap things can we do as tenants to save energy in our homes?
 - How can we help our neighbours to save energy?
 - How can we help older / more vulnerable tenants stay warm?
 - What can landlords do to help?
 - How can we recycle more, e.g. clothes, tools, upcycling

- How can we persuade landlords to do more?
- How can we change our behaviour to help save energy?
- How can we make energy bills easier to understand?
- What can we do about ventilation, draughts, thermostats...?
- What is an energy champion?
- Should tenants be offered training to become energy champions?

Session 7: How communities can generate their own energy

- ❖ Introduction: Becky Willis
- ❖ Questions to address:
 - How can communities generate their own energy?
 - What kind of renewable energy could there be where you live?
 - How would you benefit from renewable energy?
 - What kind of training would tenants be to get involved in community energy projects?

Session 8: Making our local environments green

- ❖ Introduction: Anne Power
- ❖ Questions to address:
 - What kind of green spaces are there in your local area: private gardens, balconies, back alleys, community spaces?
 - What can you grow in different types of area?
 - How can you keep your front garden tidy? Can you grow food in front gardens?
 - What free / cheap things can you get and from where, e.g. seeds / bulbs?
 - What can we do about food waste?
 - Guerrilla gardening
 - Tree planting

Session 9: Brainstorm, top ideas and round-up

- ❖ Introduction: Anne Power
- ❖ Questions to address:
 - Positive and negative experiences from tenants / community groups
 - Best ways to save energy
 - What training do tenants need?
 - What do tenants need to know?
 - How can we save money and save energy?