

## London Sustainability Exchange

**Case Study:** Faith and Utilities: Green Mosques

**Funded by:** Thames Water, SGN, UK Power Networks and SSEN

### The Challenge

**Fuel poverty affects 335,000 households in London.** In 2017, the UK government released a document on Fuel Poverty, which defines it as ‘when a household has a higher than average fuel bill and the income falls below the official poverty line after spending the amount needed to heat the home adequately’ (GLA 2017).

Research published by DBEIS (2015) suggests that there is **a higher instance of fuel poverty among ethnic minority households.** Our research with UK Power Networks (2016 & 2017) supports this, finding that people from BME communities, and particularly from Islamic households, were more likely to worry about heating their homes. Tackling fuel poverty and protecting the most vulnerable is a key issue to policy makers, and a priority for the

London Mayor as outlined in the London Environment Strategy.

### About the project

Faith and Utilities: Green Mosques aims to provide practical advice and support to help protect households vulnerable to fuel poverty and power & water outages within London’s Islamic community. UK Power Network, SGN, Thames Water & SSEN supported LSx to:

- Raise awareness regarding opportunities regarding increasing energy and water efficiency in the home
- Increase awareness of what to do in case of a power cut or water outage and preparedness to take action
- Provide practical support for billing and payments, including switching, eligibility checks and accessing grants and benefits.
- Make referrals to the Priority Service Register to increase resilience to power cuts and water outages.
- Provide additional advice and guidance such as

safety cooker valves and smart meters

## Key Successes

Over winter 2017/18, LSx led a team of **22 champions and 16 additional volunteers** from **13 charitable organisations & Mosques** to deliver events & talks, and provide tailored in-depth advice & support activities:

- **23,950** people reached through Mosque based engagements, events, talks and Kutbahs with an additional **245,071** people reached online & through social media
- **533** households supported through in-depth advice & support activities, discussing bills & benefits
  - **310** vulnerable households signing up to the **Priority Services Register**
  - **49** people interested in getting a free gas connection under the **Help to Heat Scheme**
  - **101** people informed of what to do in the case the of a power-cut
  - **73** people informed of what to do in the case the of water disruption
  - **11** people eligible for **Water Sure** and **9** for **Water Sure Plus**
  - **123** people being informed about the **Thames Water Customer Assistance Fund**

- **123** people being informed about **Warm Homes Discount & 134** for ECO
- **75** people being informed about Smart Meters
- **83** people interested in switching energy tariff /supplier / payment method
- **469** behavioural pledges recorded that collectively could save up **£21,010** annually, equivalent to **44.68** tonnes of CO<sub>2e</sub>
- **1 Champion Handbook created**

## Conclusions

- **Our targeted social marketing- approach working with Mosques and community groups was successful in identifying and providing support to vulnerable households**, with **54%** of people who received personal contact being found eligible for the Priority Service Register.
- While Mosques are great place for reaching a large number of people, **smaller settings and targeted outreach** through voluntary and community groups and confident champions are also suited to

providing tailored advice and support. Working with community groups was particularly effective as it allowed us to branch out widely among different cultural groupings to triangulate the message among different cultural groupings within Islam

- **There is a need to address fuel poverty issues beyond advice and support over short-term (6 month) projects.** In other words, engagement is not enough, fuel poverty is complex issue, more enabling actions are required over a longer timeframe.
- **There was a steep learning-curve for champions to familiarise themselves and gain confidence with the wealth of materials,** tasks and support offered through this project. Many champions would also benefit from accredited training as an additional encouragement.

## Legacy

- Having seen that a social marketing approach is successful, we should **seek ways in which this**

## **project can be applied to other vulnerable groups through culture, faith and other networks**

- It is beneficial to balance wider outreach alongside targeted general outreach to complement and triangulate messaging and maximise opportunities exemplification & encouragement.
- For **fuel poverty to be meaningfully addressed a case-worker approach should be adopted** with longer term, more in-depth one-on-one support.
- Champions need to be given a full encouragement packages which includes funding and accredited training.
- **Focusing a smaller number of targets and performance indicators** could help facilitate future projects.

*"We are very pleased to be working with London Sustainability Exchange to offer such valuable services to our vulnerable clients, not many of them know about these services but will benefit greatly"* – **Amal, Somali Integration and Development Assoc (SIDA)**

*"Thanks for the training, it was really informative and relevant. We proudly support our project volunteers to pass on this information to those who need it"* -

**Mahmoud, EMCA**