

Making your green open homes event relevant and inclusive

*When you're planning your open homes event, it's good to think about how you can make your event relevant and inclusive – **relevant** to people in your local community, and **inclusive** by addressing barriers that may prevent people from attending or getting involved in your event.*

If you want to inspire people to make energy saving improvements in their homes, you need your event to be relevant to their situation. There are a number of ways you can do this.

Diversity of homes. Having a **mixture of housing types** (flats, terraced houses, detached houses, etc.) will ensure you're opening up homes which a variety of visitors can relate to. Quirky 'eco-homes' can be interesting and fun, but they need to be part of a good mix which is representative of the homes in your area. The same applies to new-builds.

Diversity of tenures. Different tenure types (social housing, privately owned, privately rented, or cooperatively owned,) brings with them different issues for energy efficiency and/or renewable energy measures. It's great to have a range of situations that a variety of visitors can be inspired by.

Diversity of homeowners. Having a variety of homeowners – for example, of different ages or cultural backgrounds – will increase the likelihood that your event feels relevant to a wide variety of people. Research shows that people are more likely to respond to a 'social norm' for a group that they associate themselves with.

Diversity of measures. Ensure there is a range of energy efficiency measures and renewable energy technologies to see across your open homes. This will help the event cater for the breadth of visitor interests and budgets.

For further advice see our resource '*Recruiting and supporting householders*'.

Making everyone welcome

What might prevent some people from coming to your event?

Physical access. Some visitors may have accessibility requirements – they may be deaf or hard of hearing, or visually impaired, or may need wheelchair access. Ask open homes hosts if their homes are accessible to wheelchair users – some won't be, but at others a sturdy wooden board at a threshold may be all that's required. Make it clear if there are access restrictions so visitors won't be disappointed. See 'A guide to delivering accessible events' from the Office for Disability Issues: www.bit.ly/157v2G5

Geographical spread. How easily will people be able to visit the homes. Are they accessible by public transport or bike, and what parking is available? All these issues should be taken into consideration if your event has a 'hub'. Some open homes events have run bus tours between the various locations.

Practical needs. Different visitors will have different needs. Older people may not be able to stand up for long, some visitors will have children who will want something to divert them, and there may be visitors who are allergic to pets. It may not be possible to cater for everyone, but do the best you can and respect the decisions of open homes hosts.

Cultural considerations. Think about the mix of cultures in your community and about the different needs that may arise, for example avoiding clashing with religious or cultural holidays and events.

General tips for helping to make your event as inclusive as possible:

- If your event has booking forms, make sure it asks the right questions about access.
- Provide clear information about each open home so that visitors can plan which homes to visit.

- Use the expertise of local organisations, neighbourhood forums or partnerships, especially those working with more isolated members of your community, or working to improve the inclusivity of services and events.
- Have as diverse a planning group as possible.
- At your event, make sure it is clear who your event helpers are, and that they're clearly visible.

Marketing your event

How you publicise your event will affect whether people feel it is relevant to them. People are interested in retrofitting for a variety of reasons – saving money, being green, and so on – so make sure your publicity ticks lots of interest boxes, or focuses on those that are most relevant to your local community or target audience.

Make sure your publicity clearly communicates how you're hoping to cater for a variety of needs (and be open about where you can't). It may be helpful to provide a contact telephone number (and an encouraging sentence or two) so that people can get in touch if they have questions or concerns.

Use a variety of mediums (newspapers, leaflet drops, local radio, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), as well as a variety of outlets (local networks, organisations, pubs, cafes, schools, community centres) to reach as wide an audience as possible. Make sure any printed information you send out is easily readable.

For further advice see our guidance note '*Marketing your event to the public*'.

Monitoring and evaluation

Feedback forms are a good way to ask people what their experience was, and whether or not they felt their needs were catered for. This can then inform any future events you may organise.

The **Green Open Homes** network supports low carbon retrofit by promoting existing open homes events and helping new initiatives get going with resources, practical support and funding.

We've produced lots of other information sheets like this one covering legal and insurance issues, volunteers and marketing. See www.greenopenhomes.net



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