

# Planning effective water efficiency initiatives

Learning from the Evidence Base, Save Water Swindon and Tap into Savings





# Planning effective water efficiency initiatives

Drawing on the lessons learnt from two large-scale water efficiency retrofit initiatives, as well as other projects included within the Evidence Base, this short guide identifies eight key elements to consider when planning a home visit programme in which water saving devices are fitted.

Each year the quality, scale and savings of water efficiency projects are improving. In the December 2011 Water White Paper, the government made it clear that they want to see water companies increase this activity, in the context of climate change and population growth, right across the country – not only in areas currently defined as water-stressed. The guidance for the next round of Water Resource Management Plans makes this explicit: “Government believes further action will be needed to tackle demand pressures”.

As water companies develop their business plans for the next Price Review (in 2014) and their Water Resource Management Plans for the next 25 years, they need the most up-to-date knowledge, as well as recent figures on costs and savings. Therefore, it is essential to draw on the practical lessons of past water efficiency projects.

The government accepts that water efficiency retrofitting and advice is cost-effective. It is also an essential tool in adapting to climate change, cutting emissions in homes and from the water industry. This short guide will help water companies put demand management at the heart of their WRMPs and PR14 plans.

# Learning from The Evidence Base, Save Water Swindon and Tap into Savings

**The Evidence Base for Large-scale Water Efficiency** helps water companies identify effective approaches to water efficiency programmes. Bringing together data from across the industry, the Evidence Base provides a robust basis upon which to plan future activities and provides guidance as to how to carry them out. The Evidence Base is run by Waterwise and funded by Defra, the Environment Agency and Ofwat. The programme is steered by a range of water company representatives.

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**Save Water Swindon**, a partnership between Thames Water, Waterwise and WWF, aims to reduce water use in Swindon to ensure that there is enough for people and the natural environment, now and in the future. It is the first project to take a 'whole-town' approach. The project is ongoing in 2012, with over 2,500 home makeovers completed to date.

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During 2010 and 2011, the **Tap into Savings** programme helped residents in three different areas around England save water, energy and money. Over 4,500 home visits were carried out in social housing and surrounding neighbourhoods. During these visits, free water and energy efficiency devices were fitted and advice provided. The programme was funded by Defra and involved a number of partner organisations: Waterwise, Global Action Plan, KR Social Research, Anglian Water, Severn Trent Water, Sutton and East Surrey Water, Environment Agency, Braintree District Council, Coventry City Council, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council, Greenfields Community Housing, Raven Housing Trust and Whitefriars Housing Group.

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For more information about all of these projects see the Waterwise website: [www.waterwise.org.uk](http://www.waterwise.org.uk)

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IT IS IMPORTANT to give enough time to considering the project setup, decisions made at the very beginning will have an impact throughout the lifetime of the initiative.



## Get the setup spot-on



*We created a customer database and reporting infrastructure from day one, we set that up before we started the project. Our reporting infrastructure is essential.”*

Save Water Swindon partner

Setting up a comprehensive project database that can be interrogated during and after projects is crucial. It streamlines project organisation and allows comparison between the relative success of recruitment methods.



The direct delivery or outsourcing of installations should be decided on a case-by-case basis depending on the individuals, organisations and project involved. Different delivery models were used in each of the three Tap into Savings project areas, with direct delivery proving particularly successful. This was attributed to the training and support provided by the project team, as well as the clear lines of communication to staff on the ground allowing any problems to be identified and dealt with quickly.



Timing is important. Launching a new initiative near Christmas can have a negative impact on recruitment efforts and appointment booking. However, spring and summer school holidays present an opportunity as many people are home and available for home visits.





PARTNERSHIP WORKING BRINGS benefits in terms of budget, knowledge and resources; however water efficiency planners should not overlook potential hurdles.

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# Have realistic expectations of partnership working



*In isolation, with our limited funds, we couldn't have done anything on this scale. It's the pulling together of resources, knowledge and aspirations for a big and bold project – that's when a partnership comes into its own."*

Tap into Savings partner

Partners' expectation should be managed carefully, roles and responsibilities for each partner organisation must be clear from the outset, and communication channels must remain open throughout.

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Each organisation must be completely bought into the project at all levels, allowing access to the deeper benefits of working together such as leveraging the knowledge, information and influence of partners.

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Not all aspects of a project need to be run in partnership. Some elements will benefit from being shared, such as communications, while others can be better handled by a single organisation, such as the delivery of home visits.

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There must be enough time allocated for agreement to be reached without impacting upon delivery. Each organisation has different agendas and different ways of working, so even though all share the same ultimate goals reaching an agreement on different aspects of a project can be difficult.

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THE TYPE OF INITIATIVE, the products on offer, the recruitment methods used and the messages employed, all need to consider the target audience.



# Understand your audience



*If you can do your bit without it being difficult, I don't see why you don't do it. So we've got the recycling bins — easy, chuck your rubbish in that instead of in that one — and it was the same with water"*

Tap into Savings resident

Aspects such as typical property age and type, household size, the presence of gardens and so on should all be taken into account.



How do you sell the project? Understanding resident motivations and the message you use is key. Will you focus on saving money? The environment? 'Doing your bit'? No single message will appeal to all residents, but it is worth considering the local context.



In addition to free products and advice, projects can create further incentives for residents to take part, and even to 'refer a friend'. Discounts with local businesses or a prize draw could be considered.



It is important to be clear in project literature about the reasons for offering free home visits, otherwise residents may be suspicious. In both Save Water Swindon and Tap into Savings, this was reported as one of the most common barriers to recruitment.



'Doing your bit' for the environment was one of the most common motivators for residents who took part in Tap into Savings, alongside saving money and simple curiosity.

THERE IS NO ideal recruitment package or method that will lead to a successful project. In order to increase the likelihood of successful recruitment, the methods should be tailored as far as possible to the scope and target audience of that project.



## Get a yes

Letters should be personally addressed. A named letter is much more likely to be opened.

Deciding how to recruit households depends on the project aims. A letter alone is typically expected to achieve a 10% response on average, so for some projects sending out a large number of letters is deemed the most appropriate method.



If a project aims to achieve a higher uptake in a more selective area, it will need to utilise other recruitment techniques, such as follow-up phone calls, door-knocking, stands at local events and more.



When recruiting for home visits, it is important to have a number of different reply channels, for example telephone, online and prepaid postal responses.



The appointment system should allow for recruiters to book a home visit on the spot. Beware of booking appointments too far into the future: in Tap into Savings it was found that if residents waited too long between signing up to take part and receiving their visit, they often forgot or even changed their mind.





CHOOSING THE RIGHT products means that not only can you maximise the water savings at the time of the project, but those water savings will continue into the future.



## Select the right products

In order to maximise the number of products fitted, select products that are proven to fit into the majority of households (i.e. existing taps, toilets and showers). Alternatively, carry a selection of products, such as a range of tap inserts.



Fitting products that work well will not only help to ensure that they remain installed after the home visit, but will also help to encourage positive word of mouth.

Choosing products that people want to have fitted in their homes will help recruitment. In Save Water Swindon hose guns and hanging basket water gels proved popular. Even though these are not the biggest water savers, where included as part of a package they can help a home visit appeal to the widest possible audience.



Clearly describing what products are, how they work, and why they benefit the resident is a key part of recruitment. It enables people to understand what is on offer and why they should want them fitted in their home.



THE HOME VISIT is a great opportunity to raise awareness of water efficiency, so ensuring that installers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic is key.

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## Well-trained staff can make a project



*The installer training needs to be very thorough. You're not just training on how to fit devices but also why the project is happening – and you need to make sure installers aren't giving the wrong messages when they go into a home."*

Tap into Savings partner

Training for installers must focus on both how to fit the products and how to communicate with residents.

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Beware of installers who are not bought into the project or the need for water efficiency, as they can be damaging not only to the success of the particular initiative, but also to the reputation of the organisations involved.

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Encourage installers and other customer-facing staff to have a home visit themselves. In Tap into Savings this was found to help them talk about the process confidently and pre-empt some of the questions they faced later on.

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Utilising the local knowledge of staff benefits any initiative, helping identify avenues through which to successfully recruit, and key people within the community to get on board.

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GOOD RECORD KEEPING is important to successfully delivering a project. It can aid understanding of how aspects such as recruitment have worked, and identify potential issues.

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# Maintain good records, monitor and evaluate

Logging recruitment activities by property, including the date and outcome, allows analysis of different methods. Some projects included in the recent Evidence Base report on improving uptake had begun to analyse the effectiveness of different messages in this way, helping to increase the impact of later recruitment activities.

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Monitoring progress and ensuring the delivery structure allows for adjustments as new knowledge becomes available will greatly benefit any water efficiency initiative.

Home visit details need to be recorded, including a log of the products installed. If an installer is required to later revisit a home, this should also be noted as repeat visits may be indicative of a broader issue requiring attention such as incorrect installation of particular products.

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Evaluating the success of any water efficiency initiative is vital, not only in terms of measuring impact, but also to ensure that any lessons learned can be incorporated into the planning of future projects. Informal feedback from staff and residents can be just as important as information gathered through water meter readings and surveys when it comes to understanding how a project has worked.

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A RETROFIT IS an ideal opportunity to help households start taking care with the water they use, or become more efficient. A home visit should be viewed as an initial step in changing water using behaviours.

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## Aim to raise awareness and influence behaviours

Many residents who took part in Tap into Savings were more conscious of the water they used after the home visit.

Products alone do not save water, they rely on people to use them in the correct way. When installing products as part of a home visit retrofit, engaging with the resident is as important as fitting the products.

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Some products are great for raising awareness and encouraging behavioural changes, for example shower timers.

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It is important to remember that increased awareness does not necessarily result in behavioural change, and it is unlikely that a home visit alone will result in wide-reaching changes on the part of the individual.

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After visit follow up: reinforcing messages through continued contact may help to influence water using attitudes and behaviours long-term.

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*You think — No, I won't tip that water away, I'll save that water for the washing up later on. You save it that way. But before this was done —being honest with you— I didn't think about it.”*

Tap into Savings resident

Waterwise is an independent, not for profit, non-governmental organisation focused on decreasing water consumption in the UK and building the evidence base for large scale water efficiency. We are the leading authority on water efficiency in the UK. Our aim is to reverse the upward trend in how much water we all use at home and at work. For more information please visit [www.waterwise.org.uk](http://www.waterwise.org.uk)

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