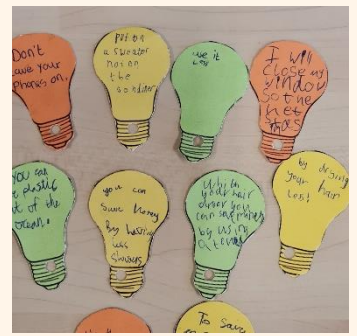


Summary of Findings: Empower You Too



This report is a mixed methods evaluation by Bromley by Bow Insights on the Empower You Too project, funded by the Energy Industry Voluntary Redress Scheme. The project ran for two years from September 2020-August 2022 to provide a range of innovative energy advice in partnership between four organisations: the Bromley by Bow Centre, Age UK East London, Citizen's Advice East End and Poplar HARCA.

The innovation and the wider context

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many of the standard indicators of energy vulnerability (c.f. Middlemiss and Gillard, 2015) and prompted a complete change of the programme delivery. The ensuring cost of living crisis heightened demand for the support. Through these changes, the Empower You Too project held partnership at its core, and its design relied on social networks and the leverage of relationships – between organisations and community members – to share knowledge and build community capacity for energy saving action.

Who was supported

The programme supported over 1,750 unique households with energy advice. Across the project, participants were primarily married women not in employment and renting their homes from a housing association within Tower Hamlets. The majority were in receipt of a state benefit and the main ethnicity was Bangladeshi.

Only 14% of people agreed that they had enough money to pay their bills.

What happened

Empower You Too provided three strands of support: to individuals, groups and networks. The main delivery was one-to-one appointments, workshops and the six week Energy Champion training, supplemented by training and resources to build the system capacity.



* Throughout this report, you will see "n=" next to a percentage figure or in a table. This is the number of people the percentage is based on (the sample size).

Participants stressed the informative nature of the workshops, the clear presentation and the relevance of the sessions. The “building blocks” for creating this experience included:

- Flexibility and mutual support within team working;
- Fun and visual outreach activities suitable for families;
- Person-centred one-to-one sessions;
- Workshops enabling conversation and with simple actionable steps;
- Packaged and connected learning with Train the Trainer workshops;
- Perseverance and patience to support learners to achieve their goals;
- Encouraging interaction within Energy Champion training sessions.



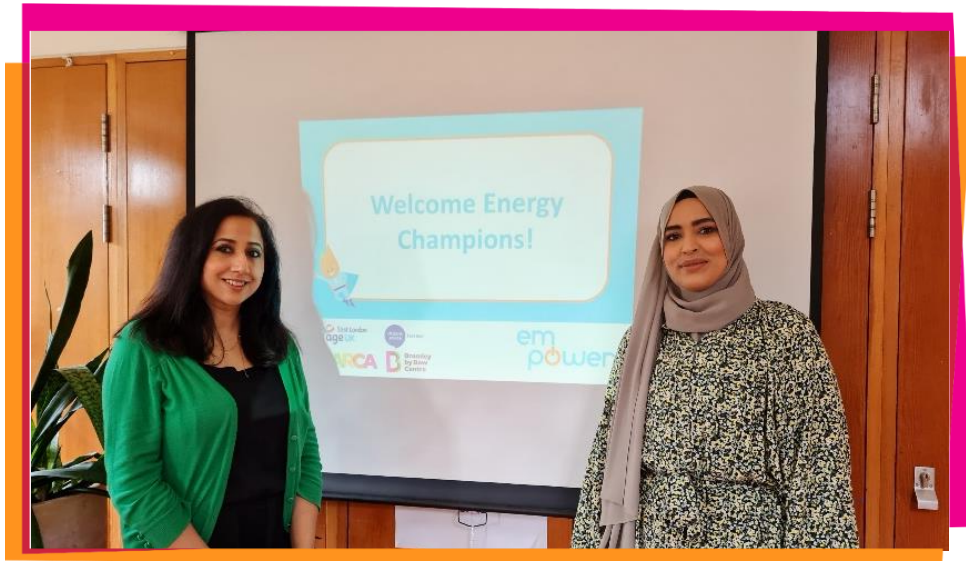
The outcome

The project activities worked towards three aims for the individuals involved:

- **Meeting basic needs:** 55% of participants (across one-to-one, workshop and Energy Champion clients, n=174) agreed that their finances were more under control as a result of the project, and 60% agreed that their home was warm enough
- **Building knowledge and skills:** 75% of participants (n=174) agreed that they now knew how to get the support they needed, whilst 86% said that they could do more to look after themselves and their family.
- **Taking action for yourself and others:** 85% of participants (n=155) agreed that they had used the new knowledge they had gained to improve their day to day life.

“Without you I would feel lost. I used to switch off fridge overnight. Before I was stressed out with electric bill and doing random things. Now I know what to target... I came out trying to remember everything, it is really important information.” (Workshop participant)

“I’ve been telling everyone about what I’ve learnt – they must think I’m bonkers!” (Energy Champion)



On average Train the Trainer participants' knowledge of energy-related matters rose from 2.74 to 4.35 out of 5 (n=32); participants sought information to support clients who might be struggling. Training professionals and five cohorts of Energy Champions signifies an important reservoir of energy advice knowledge in the voluntary sector, NHS and local networks.

In addition, for Energy Champions there was good evidence of a range of further impacts:

- **Wider knowledge and skills:** 94% (n=31) improved their digital confidence; whilst 76% (n=42) thought they had more job-related skills.
- **Wellbeing:** positive improvement in wellbeing, rising on average 0.8 in life satisfaction and anxiety reducing by 1.5 – against a national variation of 0.4 points.
- **Connection:** 57% (n=42) felt less lonely; 60% (n=42) had made new friends
- **Community:** 88% (n=42) felt more motivated to help themselves and others;

“I used to feel helpless but not anymore. It gives you confidence and willpower to move forward. I'm in control now.” (Energy Champion)

“I've turned my thermostat down by one degree and it's working! - I'm saving money! Plus I get to calculate my bills- I question the provider when I feel my bill is high. I learnt about having an efficient boiler and spoke to the council to replace mine... Whenever I learn, I can't keep it to myself. I have to share, teach others.” (Energy Champion)

“This course brings about a strong sense of community and friends working together.” (Energy Champion)

Conclusion

The Empower You Too project was marked throughout by its context: changing programme design and shaping community response to the support provided. Flexibility and the focus on building relationships have enabled its adaptation to a very challenging context. Recommendations for the future focus on: longer-term sustainable funding for energy advice; deepening the system-wide and network approach to impact; and developing progression options for Energy Champions.