



Community Energy for Energy Solidarity: Evaluation of the CEES pilot projects

Allenergy chapter

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Introduction

The CEES project and the CEES evaluation

In the Community Energy for Energy Solidarity (CEES)¹ project, six energy communities implemented six pilot projects to alleviate energy poverty, including projects to diversify sources of funding for this work. Knowledge exchange and mutual support between the energy communities was a key component of the six pilots. Within CEES, such projects are referred to as a form of energy solidarity. Led by the University of Birmingham, the CEES team implemented a comprehensive evaluation of the six pilot projects.

Evaluation materials

The following evaluation materials are available at www.energysolidarity.eu/evaluation:

- A short summary of the evaluation findings
- The Full evaluation report (232pp)
- The Executive summary (15pp)
- Individual documents of each of the evaluations of the six CEES pilot projects, plus an additional project that was evaluated through CEES.
- The full Evaluation framework (60pp)

About this document

This document contains the evaluation of the pilot project that was implemented by Allenergy, UK. In the Full evaluation report, this is Chapter 5 and begins on p36.

Key terms in this document

Energy poverty

The situation in which households are unable to access affordable energy services (such as adequate warmth, cooling, lighting, and energy to power appliances), which underpin elements of human flourishing (such as health and wellbeing, relationships, social inclusion, employment, recreation and education). (Day et al.,2016)².

¹ The CEES project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101026972. The project commenced in June 2021 and ran to the end of August 2024.

² Day, R. et al (2016) Conceptualising energy use and energy poverty using a capabilities framework, Energy Policy, 93: 255–264.



Energy communities

Local collectives of individuals that tend to share values and ambitions relating to: supporting equitable, democratic and fair transitions towards more local, sustainable and efficient energy systems; establishing renewable and decentralised energy systems; assisting local community members with energy efficiency, demand reduction and energy poverty; or economic activity on energy for social and community benefit. These organisations are diverse in structure, size and scope.

Energy solidarity

Actors willingly working in ways that align, on a shared goal of overcoming energy-related adversity that is experienced by one or more of the parties. Energy solidarity is inspired by empathy and / or a sense of justice, and may, but does not have to, involve reciprocal obligation. Stronger solidarity involves a more sustained commitment, and / or a willingness to incur a higher personal cost in pursuit of the shared goal. (Day and Burchell, 2023)³

Fund mechanism

Fund mechanisms are employed to raise funds or income to fund work on energy poverty alleviation.

Identify mechanism

Identify mechanisms aim to seek out and identify households in energy poverty, recruit them to projects and assess their eligibility for projects.

Alleviate ('soft' and 'hard') mechanism

Alleviate mechanisms aim to alleviate energy poverty. 'Soft' alleviation mechanisms do this through household engagement, provision of advice about energy poverty, energy efficiency measures, the provision of energy kits consisting of a variety of small energy efficiency measures (such as window insulation material) and support applying for financial support. 'Hard' alleviation mechanisms alleviate energy poverty through building renovation, retrofitting and refurbishment. In CEES, hard alleviation was undertaken in one pilot project. Several of the CEES pilot projects include recruitment and training for energy advisers. These activities have been included as part of the Alleviate mechanisms.

³ Day, R. and K. Burchell (2023) Energy solidarity in Energy Communities: alleviating energy poverty and supporting just energy transitions through solidarity approaches.: European Sociological Association RN12 mid-term and Energy and Society Network 6th international joint conference; Energy, Environment and Societies in Crises, 6-8 September 2023, Trento, Italy.



ALlenergy



1. Summary (EO1)

The evaluation report addresses the following mechanisms.

The new CEES mechanism

1. **Fund:** Funding diversification, including microdonations (inspired by Energie Solidaire)⁴ and other approaches. The funding secured through these activities allowed ALlenergy to implement further mechanisms in a new area (the Highland region of Scotland).

Additional mechanisms

2. **Identify mechanism:** Prior to CEES, ALlenergy had a long-standing and successful referral network, consisting of other public and third sector organisations, in its established areas in the west of Scotland. The new work in the Highland region required ALlenergy to set up a similar referral network in the Highland region.
3. **Alleviate mechanism:** Prior to CEES, ALlenergy also had a long-standing and successful energy poverty advice service, known as the Affordable Warmth programme, in its established areas in the west of Scotland. Within this programme, advice was largely provided in home visits. Implementing the new Highland Affordable Warmth programme required:
 - a. Recruiting and training a new energy advisor team to work in the Highland region.
 - b. Developing new work practices for remote implementation in the energy crisis.
 - c. Implementing the Affordable Warmth programme in a new area.

⁴ The Energie Solidaire microdonations approach allows energy customers to make microdonations as part of their energy bills.



Evaluation summary

Fund

The core objective of ALLenergy's CEES pilot project was to diversify its portfolio of funding sources beyond grant funding. Inspired by Enercoop's Energie Solidaire microdonations approach⁵, ALLenergy began by exploring microdonations. It was not possible for ALLenergy to implement a microdonations approach, largely because it does not have customers. Nonetheless, this work inspired ALLenergy to investigate other sources of funding and the objective of diversifying funding has been achieved in the short term. During the CEES project, to May 2024, ALLenergy raised a total of €213,800⁶. This comprised €1,442 from public donations, €2,738 from corporate donations, €201,250 from a public sector service contract and €7,371 in the form of referral fees. Longer-term plans for funding diversification are also in place, including collaborating in a charity shop that opened in May 2024 and partnerships with local renewables developers. ALLenergy noted that all of these approaches to fund raising are time-consuming to implement.

Alleviate

One of the new funding streams, service provision, enabled ALLenergy to expand the provision of its well-established Affordable Warmth energy poverty advice service from the west of Scotland into the Highland region of Scotland. This new work in the Highland region was evaluated as part of the CEES evaluation. The programme consisted of the provision of energy advice (on the telephone and in home visits) and support to access 'crisis grants'. This required setting up a new referral network, the recruitment and training of three new energy advisors and the development of new working practices. Although there were some challenges along the way, qualitative and quantitative data from the project managers, the three new energy advisors, participating households and a senior manager in the referral network confirms that ultimately all of these tasks were implemented successfully. Between November 2022 and May 2024, in the Highland region, ALLenergy provided energy advice to 1,348 households and secured crisis grants to a value of €322,115 for 1,036 households.

Due to external factors – for instance, seasonal variations in household energy consumption and changing energy prices – it is important to be cautious about attributing change within households entirely to any intervention. Nonetheless, the evaluation shows a range of positive changes for households in the months following their engagement with the Highland Affordable Warmth programme. In particular, the evaluation highlights reduced household difficulties with paying energy bills, reduced household self-restriction of a range of energy services and increased household knowledge and understanding of ways of reducing energy consumption and costs. Despite the

⁵ This approach allows energy customers to pay a microdonation as part of their bill to support work on energy poverty.

⁶ Sterling equivalents have been converted to Euros at £1/€1.15.



important caveats, there are certainly indications that the Highland Affordable Warmth programme produces positive impacts for households. Allenergy stressed the importance of working with households to fully understand and optimise their home energy situation to improve resilience to energy poverty, addressing both short-term and long-term challenges. At the same time, Allenergy itself referred to some of the crisis interventions provided through the programme as ‘sticking plasters’ – that is, a short-term solution only – in a time of very high and ongoing levels of energy poverty.

The legacy of Allenergy’s CEES pilot project is that it now has a very entrepreneurial approach to fund-raising that is likely to enhance its ability to sustain and grow its energy poverty services in the future. In addition, the legacy of the pilot project is that Allenergy has successfully extended the geographical reach of its Affordable Warmth programme across the Highland region of Scotland.

2. Introduction

About Allenergy (EO1)

Allenergy is a regional energy agency and registered charity. It is based in Oban in west Scotland, in the UK. Established in 2000, the organisation works to promote sustainable energy use and renewable energy generation, to address energy poverty and reduce carbon emissions. Allenergy has worked on energy poverty for more than 20 years, through its Affordable Warmth programme.

Prior to CEES, Allenergy’s work covered a large area in west Scotland that is largely rural, sparsely populated and often very remote and inaccessible. These characteristics make service provision very challenging. In addition, demand is very high; in 2023, Energy Action Scotland estimated that 50% of households in this area were living with energy poverty⁷. These high levels of energy poverty are largely due to a housing stock that is typically off-gas (necessitating the use of more expensive fuels) and of relatively poor quality, as well as precarious livelihoods throughout the region.

The Allenergy pilot

As described above, the Allenergy CEES pilot project comprised a Fund mechanism, an Identify mechanism and an Alleviate (soft) mechanism.

The timescales for Allenergy’s pilot activities are shown in Table 5.1.

	2022	2023	2024
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⁷ To produce this estimate in 2023, Energy Action Scotland extrapolated data from the Scottish Government’s [Scottish Housing Conditions Survey: 2019](#) (2019 is the most recent year for which data is available at the Local Authority level).



	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Funding diversification (Fund)									
Setting up new Highland referral network (Identify)									
Training and developing new work practices (Alleviate).									
Delivering the Highland Affordable Warmth programme (Alleviate)									

Table 5.1: Timescales of the Allenergy pilot project.

Organisational structure

The Funding diversification element of the Allenergy pilot was managed by the Chief Executive Officer of Allenergy. The new Highland Affordable Warmth programme was managed by the Chief Operations Officer who already managed the existing programme in the west of Scotland. The new Highland Affordable Warmth programme was delivered by three energy advisors who were recruited and trained for the purpose (see below).

3. Funding diversification (EO2)

Introduction

'It is like building a house on a rock instead of sand' (Allenergy).

Prior to CEES, Allenergy had a longstanding and successful funding strategy through applying for competitive grants (such as the CEES funding). Despite the success of this approach, Allenergy was keen to diversify its funding portfolio for the following reasons:

- It is often difficult to fund core costs through grant funding.
- Grant funding is typically relatively inflexible; it needs to be spent within specific time periods and on specific activities.
- Different grant schemes bring widely varying approaches to reporting, which can also be time consuming.
- It can be challenging to provide stability for staff based on grant funding.

In response to these challenges, Allenergy implemented a range of funding diversification activities. While this work began with investigating the Énergie Solidaire microdonations approach, it also included implementation of other approaches. Each of these is described in the following sections, along with its successes and challenges.



Microdonations

Process

ALLenergy was initially inspired by the Énergie Solidaire microdonations scheme (Enercoop's case study mechanism), in which Enercoop's energy customers have the option to make microdonations, through their energy bill payments, to support work on energy poverty. Thus, ALLenergy began its work on funding diversification by exploring its own options for setting up a microdonation scheme. Unlike Enercoop, ALLenergy does not have its own energy customers. For this reason, ALLenergy explored options with local, regional and national (in Scotland) businesses in a number of sectors. Within this model, the idea was that customers of these businesses would make micro-donations to ALLenergy on top of their payments to the business. In addition, ALLenergy investigated the technical and contractual aspects of several microdonations software platforms.

Challenges

A number of challenges soon became apparent. Setting up a microdonations scheme requires significant and off-putting technical input for both the recipient of the donations (ALLenergy) and the third-party organisation through which the donations are made. Smaller companies also had relatively small numbers of customers, thus limiting the potential of the approach. Finally, while regional and national companies might have been able to handle this technical work and offer sufficient customers, they were put off by the geographical mismatch between their own areas of operation and ALLenergy's.

As ALLenergy itself put it:

'The micro-donation mechanism sounded at first really inspiring and hopeful for us. When we explored it in a little bit more detail, it became clear that actually it's quite complicated and it would require quite a lot of background work, not just bringing in partners who would have to commit to it and do a fair bit of work themselves, but also technical background as well. So, it became obvious that this might not work within the CEES timescale, and it might not work in the rural setting as well when we're looking at small businesses that are limited geographically, rather than larger ones with many, many different customers.'

Outcomes

Although the micro-donations approach did not work in the way that had been hoped, the work on this opened up new ways of thinking about funding and encouraged ALLenergy to investigate other options.

As ALLenergy stated:

'It got us into a different mindset, it sort of made us escape from the grant-funding mindset a bit, and it gave us the incentive to start contacting potential funding sources directly, and just exploring the opportunities for different kinds of donations, which has been quite successful, particularly in one instance where we have succeeded in bringing



in a significant amount of money. So, we're really happy to have been kind of helped onto that new path for fundraising.'

Public donations

Process

Alongside its early work on microdonations, Allenergy also started work on securing public donations. Over time, this work comprised:

- Setting up a '[Donate](#)' button on the Allenergy website. The 'wonderful.co.uk' platform was chosen for this because it is easy to use and inexpensive.
- Creating a QR code linking to the 'Donate' button and using the QR code in email signatures, newsletters, event banners, large banners in public places (see photo) and in social media.



Allenergy banner showing the donations QR code.

Challenges

Allenergy experienced the following challenges in its work on public donations:

- Allenergy felt uncomfortable about setting up a system for public donations during a 'cost of living crisis'.
- Investigating the best donations platform (especially with respect to charges) was time-consuming but ultimately not too onerous.
- Maintaining a strong social media presence was time-consuming and challenging in the midst of very high levels of demand for services.
- It was challenging to encourage donors to move from one-off donations to regular donations.

Outcomes

A number of positive outcomes can be identified with respect to public donations. Allenergy raised €1,442 through public donations to May 2024 (this included one significant public donation from a



collection at a local funeral). Although further developments are not ruled out, ALLenergy reports that it now has a robust set of processes for public donations and has noted that the public donations are of great value because they provide an income stream that can be used flexibly across its energy poverty activities.

Donations and funding from organisations

Process

ALLenergy also established a process for securing donations and funding from organisations. Through internet research, ALLenergy carefully selected appropriate local/regional organisations and approached them with a personalised email (as opposed to conducting a large-scale generic direct marketing campaign). The organisations that ALLenergy contacted had one or more of the following characteristics: local and regional organisations; public sector organisations with tenants; private sector organisations with a corporate social responsibility record; private sector organisations working in energy, especially renewable energy; and private sector organisations that are likely to be thriving (e.g. solicitors). When organisations expressed an interest in donating or providing funding, ALLenergy developed bespoke slide decks for presentations to candidate organisations and engaged in a series of meetings with the organisations to negotiate the detail of the donation or funding.

Challenges

Although this work was successful and directly supported the work on energy poverty that is discussed below, ALLenergy also reported challenges. This work is very time-consuming. Typically, securing such funding requires repeated meetings with and presentations to potential donors or funders. This is very understandable because it is necessary to build trust and establish firm credentials as a legitimate and worthy recipient of donations and funding. In addition, this work was made more challenging by the impacts of high inflation and the 'cost of living crisis' on both public and private sector organisations. This meant that organisations were less able to make donations.

Outcomes

ALLenergy reports that it now has a robust process and set of communications materials for approaching organisations and establishing productive relationships with them. In November 2022, ALLenergy secured funding of €184,000 from a large social housing provider in the Highland region to implement the Affordable Warmth programme for its (this work is evaluated in the Identify and Alleviate sections below). In January 2024, ALLenergy received further funding of €17,250 from the same housing provider to extend the Affordable Warmth programme (total €201,250). Further, as a direct result of the Highland project, a local insulation installer donated €1,150 from its Community Development Fund, for the purchase of 100 'cosy kits'⁸ for use in the Highland Affordable Warmth programme. ALLenergy also

⁸ 'Cosy kit' is ALLenergy's term for a bag containing a range of easy to install/use energy efficiency items.



received donations from a local law firm and a renewable energy company with local interests. In total, Allenergy raised €3,738 from corporate donations.

Referral fees

In mid-2023, Allenergy's increasingly entrepreneurial approach to fund-raising led to it negotiating and establishing an arrangement through which it received referral fees from a private sector company that provides and installs domestic insulation and renewables. To May 2024, Allenergy has raised €7,371 through this contract.



Allenergy 'cosy kits' and event banner in the Allenergy storeroom.

Overall outcomes

The funds that were raised through all of these approaches, from May 2022 to May 2024, are shown in Table 5.2 (over the page). During this two year period, Allenergy raised a total of €213,800.

Other developments

In partnership with several other local charities, Allenergy opened a charity shop and community space in Oban (where Allenergy is based) in May 2024. The charity shop will provide income for the charities. The plan is for the community space to be available for community workshops, for example, upcycling and repair workshops, which will produce further income in some cases. It can also be used by the charities for their own work, for example, for Allenergy to put together their 'cosy kits' for people in energy poverty and for one of the other partners to prepare food parcels for people in poverty.



As a further possible funding stream, ALLenergy is also investigating investing in local third-party renewable energy developments. By July 2024, ALLenergy had undertaken meetings with four schemes and negotiations are ongoing.

Month	Social Housing Provider	Corporate Donations	Small Individual Donations	Referral Fees
July 2022		€575		
August 2022		€288		
September 2022			€1,150	
October 2022				
November 2022	€46,000			
December 2022				
January 2023			€183	
February 2023	€46,000			
March 2023				
April 2023				
May 2023	€46,000		€109	
June 2023				
July 2023				
August 2023	€46,000			
September 2023				€1,750
October 2023				
November 2023		€1,725		€2,858
December 2023		€1,150		
January 2024	€17,250			
February 2024				€1,459
March 2024				
April 2024				€1,304
May 2024				
Totals	€201,250	€3,738	€1,442	€7,371
GRAND TOTAL	€213,800			

Table 5.2. Funds raised in the ALLenergy pilot project to May 2024.



4. Identify (EO3)

Identify: the new professional targeting referral network

Process

As discussed earlier, since ALLenergy was starting to work in a new geographical area (the Highland region), it needed to set up a new referral network. ALLenergy's process for this was informed by the need to get the right balance between too few and too many new client households contacting the Affordable Warmth service. This is likely to be a key challenge for all energy solidarity projects. ALLenergy put it like this:

'At the start of the work in the Highland region we didn't really know what the volume of work would be, and it could have been really large, and there were concerns that we would be completely overwhelmed on day one with thousands of people. So, we made the decision that we would take clients in through referrals rather than to just market the service directly to all the tenants and say, "Just give us a call," because we felt that that could have been chaos and disaster if they'd all tried to call in at once. So, we have to manage the number of referrals coming in to optimise it for us so that it is not too small or not too large.'

Given the concern about the potential numbers of referrals to the Affordable Warmth service, ALLenergy developed the new professional targeting network in stages. At each stage, new members of the referral network were given briefings on the Affordable Warmth service (particularly what it does and does not offer), how to identify households that appear to be struggling with their energy bills and how to refer households to ALLenergy.

Over three stages, the following teams and organisations were brought into the network: the social housing provider's teams of Housing Officers, their other relevant staff teams (such as building maintenance), and other relevant frontline public sector and third sector organisations (for example relating to health and social care, substance abuse or suicide). At the later stages in this process, ALLenergy used other funds from its fund-raising activities to extend the Highland Affordable Warmth service to a limited number of other households in the Highland area who were not tenants of the housing provider.

Challenges

At each stage of this process, considerable time and effort was expended on meeting with and briefing these teams and organisations. Early on in the project implementation, referrals were slower to come through than had been expected or hoped. Although briefings took place in late 2022, the ALLenergy team had the impression that some referrers had decided to start referring only in the new year. ALLenergy responded to this challenge with further and repeated briefings.



In addition, Allenergy were very aware that awareness of and trust in Allenergy among households was much lower in the new Highland region than in its established areas in west Scotland. Allenergy commented:

'As we are a new service in the Highland region it takes a length of time to build up trust and for people to recognise and trust us, for word to spread that we can do something that can benefit people. I think we definitely take that for granted in Argyll and Bute because we're so well-known whereas with this one, it has taken a long time and it has been like a big snowball, which has had to grow and grow with a lot of work from our side.'

Outcomes

The numbers of referrals by month are shown in Table 5.3. The table shows that the numbers of referrals increased as referrers became more familiar with and confident about the Allenergy offer. The data that is shown in Table 5.3 (as well as Table 5.7 in the Alleviate section below) was provided by Allenergy on the basis of the records in its bespoke Client/Customer Management System (CMS). A CMS attracts a cost and can be time-consuming to set-up. Nonetheless, the experiences of Allenergy suggest that this is a worthwhile investment for organisations that plan to work in-depth with sizeable numbers of households.

Month	Number of households			
	Referrals to Allenergy	Not possible to contact	Ineligible referrals	Actionable referrals
November 2022	12	1	0	11
December 2022	11	0	0	11
January 2023	28	2	0	26
February 2023	60	9	2	49
March 2023	43	5	1	37
April 2023	28	1	3	24
May 2023	35	0	4	31
June 2023	27	0	2	25
July 2023	22	0	3	19
August 2023	40	0	6	34
September 2023	93	3	11	79
October 2023	129	1	14	114
November 2023	153	7	1	145
December 2023	156	4	0	152
January 2024	163	8	0	155
February 2024	132	7	0	125
March 2024	183	9	1	173
April 2024	71	11	0	60
May 2024	91	12	1	78
TOTAL	1477	80	49	1348

Table 5.3. Household referrals to the Highland Affordable Warmth programme to May 2024.



The assessment call

Process

Once referrals came through to Allenergy, the households received an assessment call from Allenergy. This call had three purposes:

1. To establish eligibility for Affordable Warmth. In the current energy crisis, the only eligibility criterion that Allenergy applied was to ascertain whether they could help with the households' situation.
2. To assess the situation in terms of the household structure, the heating system, the severity of the energy poverty, and the presence of vulnerabilities in the household.
3. On the basis of the assessment, to triage households to establish:
 - a. Whether an immediate crisis intervention was required and what topics of advice would be appropriate.
 - b. Whether a home visit was needed or whether a further telephone consultation would be appropriate.

Challenges

The following challenges were experienced in this stage:

1. The assessments revealed that some of the early referrals to the Affordable Warmth programme were ineligible because the challenges were not ones that Allenergy could help with, such as the need for building repairs and improvements, which are the responsibility of the housing provider. Allenergy responded to this challenge through further briefing and clarification with referring teams.
2. In some cases, it was not possible to contact the households.
3. In some cases, householder lack of knowledge (for instance, with respect to their home or their energy supplier or bills) or householders' challenges with communication meant that it was sometimes not possible to complete the assessment adequately. In some circumstances, this made it more likely that a home visit would be necessary.

Outcomes

The number of eligible and actionable referrals in the programme is shown in Table 5.3 (above). The data shows increases in referrals during the winter months when levels of energy poverty rise. Table 5.3 shows that 1348 eligible and actionable households were referred to the Highland Affordable Warmth programme between November 2022 and May 2024.

Householder responses to the 'baseline' survey suggest that the Allenergy referral network approach was effective in targeting people who are struggling to pay their energy bills. Although it is important to remember that CEES uses a definition of energy poverty that goes beyond affordability, the 167 responses to the baseline survey question, 'Thinking about the past year, how much difficulty have you



had with affording your energy bills?’ is a useful indicator of energy struggles. Table 5.4 shows that around three quarters (76%) of the respondents were experiencing ‘great difficulty’ or ‘some difficulty’ paying their energy bills in the year prior to their contact with the Affordable Warmth project. Meanwhile, very few respondents (4%) had been experiencing ‘no difficulty’ or ‘little difficulty’ paying their energy bills.

	Number (%)
1 - No difficulty	1 (1%)
2	5 (3%)
3	32 (19%)
4	16 (10%)
5 - Great difficulty	110 (66%)
No answer	3 (2%)

Table 5.4. Baseline responses to the question, ‘Thinking about the past year, how much difficulty have you had with affording your energy bills?’ (n = 167).

The demographic characteristics of the 167 participants who completed the ‘baseline’ survey are shown in Table 5.5 below.

5. Alleviate: the Affordable Warmth process (EO4.1)

Introduction: elements of the Alleviate mechanism

As mentioned earlier, ALLenergy had to set up an entirely new Affordable Warmth service in the Highland region. Thus, the ALLenergy CEES pilot alleviate process had four main elements to it:

1. Recruiting three new energy advisors to work in the Highland region.
2. Training the new energy advisors.
3. Developing new work practices, accounting for the fact that the new energy advisors would be working remotely from the ALLenergy office and the increasingly emotionally challenging nature of the work that they would be doing.
4. Delivering the Highland Affordable Warmth programme in the Highland region through a combination of providing energy advice and support applying for ‘crisis grants’ within the context of home visits and telephone consultations.

These elements are discussed in the following sections.



	Number of households (%)
Number of people in household	
1	89 (53%)
2	34 (20%)
3	21 (13%)
4	17 (10%)
5	4 (2%)
6	1 (1%)
7	0 (0%)
8	1 (1%)
Number of children (aged 17 or less) in household	
0	110 (66%)
1	21 (13%)
2	24 (14%)
3	6 (4%)
4	3 (2%)
5	1 (1%)
Number of older people (aged 65 and above) in household	
0	140 (84%)
1	20 (12%)
2	6 (4%)
One or more person with a disability or long-term illness	
Yes	83 (50%)
No	84 (50%)
One or more person in paid employment	
Yes	21 (13%)
No	90 (54%)
No answer	56 (34%)
One or more adult male in the household	
Yes	84 (50%)
No	83 (50%)
Type of property	
House	130 (78%)
Purpose built flat or apartment	36 (22%)
Tenure	
Social tenant	167 (100%)

Table 5.5. Demographic characteristics of households that completed the 'baseline' survey in the ALLenergy Affordable Warmth programme (n = 167).



Recruiting energy advisors

The process

In order to implement the work in the Highland region, Allenergy recruited three new energy advisors. Allenergy reported:

'We always use social media / all the free networks we can think of, but also some paid advertising'.

Allenergy gave a very helpful explanation of how it goes about recruiting energy advisors with the right combination of social and technical skills. These points can be summarised as follows:

- Although technical skills in energy, energy efficiency and energy poverty are important, the social skills to work well with vulnerable people are more important. Allenergy reported that, although they are able to train people in the appropriate technical skills, this is not so feasible for the required people skills.
- These essential social skills include patience, empathy and understanding; the ability to work and communicate with people who might come across as rude or angry, or might have limited cognitive capabilities; and a calm demeanour.
- CVs are helpful, but interviews are preferred for assessing these skills (including online interviews).
- Allenergy also recommends having a variety of people on the interview panel.

Challenges with recruitment

Although one advisor was recruited relatively quickly and straightforwardly, further rounds of advertising were required to recruit the other two. Allenergy suggested that this was for two key reasons:

1. Employment rates were relatively high during the recruitment period. This meant that the pool of potential recruits was perhaps smaller than it might be at time of higher unemployment.
2. The person specification for the posts was relatively specialised and geographically specific. The strong social skills mentioned above were listed as essential, with technical skills in energy efficiency and energy poverty listed as desirable. In addition, the energy advisors needed to be based in the Highland area so that home visits and attendance at events would be feasible.



Training the energy advisors

Process

ALLenergy ran a training day for its three new energy advisors (and two existing ALLenergy staff) on 24 January 2023⁹. The programme covered the following topics:

- Evolution of ALLenergy's Affordable Warmth service
- Working with people with complex needs
- Remote working
- Better Futures (ALLenergy's client management system)
- First call assessment session (as discussed above)
- Assessing funds for clients
- The role of the Energy Ombudsman

Outcomes

The data and information that was collected through the trainee survey suggests that this session was excellent. As shown in Table 5.6, all of the five participants in the training day agreed with the positive statements about the training.

	Agree	Disagree
I learned practical information and skills to help me to support householders to reduce their energy consumption and costs.	5 (100%)	0%
I feel MORE confident than before that I can support householders to reduce their energy consumption and costs.	5 (100%)	0%
I intend to take action to reduce my own energy consumption and costs.	5 (100%)	0%
The training event was well-run.	5 (100%)	0%
The training event was tailored to my needs.	5 (100%)	0%

Table 5.6. Participant perceptions of the ALLenergy training days (n = 5).

In response to the open text question, 'What was the best aspect of today's event for you?', the participants responded:

- Group discussion and updated info.
- Update on funds
- Getting the chance to discuss ALLenergy's entire service with whole team.
- Content well presented.

⁹ Referrals before this date were handled by the energy advisor that was recruited in the first round and was already experienced.



- Getting a better understanding of what is offered by ALLenergy

It is notable in these responses that two of the respondents specifically referred to the value of the group discussion. This broad theme of interaction between team members is important in the following section on new working practices. The quality of the ALLenergy training is also reflected in the participant responses to the open text question, 'Was there anything you didn't like or that didn't work for you?' In this case, all of the responses were either 'No' or 'not applicable'.

Developing new work practices

New challenges

In advance of implementing the Affordable Warmth programme in the Highland region, ALLenergy needed to develop new work practices to attend to the well-being of the energy advisors. This was for two key reasons that were likely to place growing emotional demands on energy advisors:

1. The fact that the energy advisors were working remotely, away from the ALLenergy management team and offices.
2. The deepening 'energy crisis' and broader 'cost of living crisis' meant that the desperation of many households was increasing to such an extent that some households were dangerously restricting their heating and other energy services even in the depths of a Scottish winter. ALLenergy used the phrases 'heat or eat' and 'freeze or starve' to encapsulate the challenges that households were facing.

Responses to this challenge

ALLenergy responded to this challenge by introducing a range of measures to support the well-being of the energy advisors and train the energy advisors in issues that they were increasingly likely to encounter. These included:

- Training to recognise and respond to the threat of suicide.
- Training to recognise and respond to problem gambling.
- Weekly team catch-up sessions online.
- Monthly one-to-one meetings.
- Where possible, arranging in-person team and individual meetings, with social elements, such as a dinner after work.
- Training and support with personal resilience and well-being.
- Making sure that the energy advisors know that they should not work beyond their contracted hours and that they should take their annual leave.





The ALLenergy energy advisors.

Delivering the Highland Affordable Warmth programme

New challenges and responses

The Highland Affordable Warmth programme was implemented according to a process that was different to the process that was already established in west Scotland in two key ways.

The first change responded to the new ‘crisis grant’ schemes that had been introduced by the Scottish and UK governments in response to the ‘energy crisis’. Thus, while the Affordable Warmth programme that had been established in west Scotland focused on the provision of energy advice, this was complemented across the programme (in both west Scotland and the Highland region) with providing support for households to apply for ‘crisis grants’. This involved helping the householder to compile the information and evidence that was required and making the application on behalf of the household.

The second key change responded to two factors:

1. Increasing levels of demand due to the ‘energy crisis’ and broader ‘cost of living crisis’.
2. The sparse and geographically dispersed nature of the population of the Highland region.

In response to these challenges, ALLenergy employed telephone consultations, rather than home visits, more than they had done previously. Home visits were still undertaken where this was most feasible or felt to be advantageous. Interestingly, some householders preferred the telephone approach. The team at ALLenergy felt that this may be because this allows householders to access the service without their neighbours becoming aware and/or without having to have a visitor come inside their home; both of these concerns can be understood within the context of the shame and stigma that may be felt by people living with energy poverty. It is worth noting that, although ALLenergy also experimented with video calls, the technology demands of this were too much for many of their clients.



Outcomes

The numbers of households that were supported through energy advice and by securing financial support are shown in Table 5.7¹⁰. Table 5.7 shows that energy advice was provided to all of the 1,348 eligible referrals¹¹. Financial support was secured for a slightly smaller number of households (1,036). In some cases, this was because the households were not able – or were not willing – to produce the evidence that was required for the grant scheme (such as bank account statements). Nonetheless, ALLenergy was successful in securing a total of €322,115 for households in the Highland region.

Month	Number of households			Financial support secured (€)
	Actionable referrals	Energy advice provided	Financial support secured	
November 2022	11	9	0	€0
December 2022	11	13	4	€3,261
January 2023	26	25	4	€1,842
February 2023	49	42	8	€2,637
March 2023	37	62	0	€0
April 2023	24	29	19	€1,357
May 2023	31	37	22	€6,039
June 2023	25	39	20	€8,287
July 2023	19	45	11	€1,403
August 2023	34	41	16	€8,481
September 2023	79	75	13	€2,006
October 2023	114	163	24	€6,292
November 2023	145	192	108	€60,219
December 2023	152	202	152	€51,155
January 2024	155	256	131	€49,154
February 2024	125	229	154	€62,489
March 2024	173	236	267	€33,149
April 2024	60	243	39	€19,344
May 2024	78	295	44	€5,000
TOTAL	1348	2233	1036	€322,115

Table 5.7. Numbers of households supported to May 2024.

¹⁰ Readers may note that the month-by-month numbers of households for whom support was provided often do not tally with the numbers of eligible referrals. This is because the support was typically provided to a particular household in the month or months following the establishment of the household as an eligible referral. This was particularly the case with respect to the provision of financial support, which takes longer to arrange. Further, in some cases, households needed to wait for new crisis grant schemes to begin (e.g. see the lack of funds secured in March 2023).

¹¹ The total number of households that ALLenergy engaged with was 1348. From October 2023, the figure in the 'Energy advice provided' column is higher than this because ALLenergy returned to some households with further support.



6. Alleviate: short term household experiences and impacts (EO4.2)

Short term household experiences

Short term household experiences of the Affordable Warmth programme were evaluated through three questions in the CEES 'engagement' survey. This survey was completed by 152 participating households at the end of the key engagement event (either a telephone call or a home visit) in the provision of the Highland Affordable Warmth programme to that household. The results from these questions are shown in Table 5.8.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
The telephone call/home visit today was well-run			
Telephone calls	119 (96%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)
Home visits	24 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
All events	143 (97%)	5 (3%)	0 (0%)
The telephone call/home visit suited my needs			
Telephone calls	114 (92%)	10 (8%)	0 (0%)
Home visits	24 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
All events	138 (93%)	10 (7%)	0 (0%)
The telephone call/home visit today was conducted in a respectful way			
Telephone calls	119 (96%)	5 (4%)	0 (0%)
Home visits	24 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
All events	143 (97%)	5 (3%)	0 (0%)

Table 5.8. Household experiences of the Highland Affordable Warmth programme events (n = 148).

Table 5.8 shows that household experiences of the Affordable Warmth events were positive; participants overwhelmingly agreed that the events were 'well run', 'suited their needs' and were 'conducted in a respectful way'. Agreement with all three statements is above 90% for telephone calls and is 100% for home visits. This slight difference might be related to the greater depth of engagement that is possible in a home visit. Given the lack of respect that can be experienced by people in energy poverty, it is particularly satisfying to note that across the telephone calls/home visits, 97% of respondents felt that the events were 'conducted in a respectful way'.



The 'engagement' survey also contained three open text questions. The responses to these questions further emphasise the positive experiences of householders.

- In response to the question, 'What was the best aspect of today's telephone call/home visit?', responses focused on positive themes relating to 'help', 'advice' and 'grants'.
- In response to the question, 'Was there anything you didn't like or didn't work for you?', almost all of the respondents did not answer that question or answered 'No'. One respondent commented that they were still unsure about how energy tariffs work.
- In response to the question, 'Is there anything further you would like to add?', almost all of the respondents did not answer that question or answered 'No'. One respondent only added, 'I am so grateful for the help'.

Short term impacts for households

Short term impacts of the telephone calls and home visits in the Affordable Warmth programme were examined through two further questions in the 'engagement' survey that was discussed above. The findings from these questions are shown in Table 5.9. Despite the positive answers regarding the experience of the calls / visits noted above, answers to these questions on the impacts were more ambivalent, with 36% of respondents responding that they neither agreed nor disagreed that they had learned practical information and skills to help them reduce energy costs, or that they felt confident they could reduce energy costs in the future. This is perhaps not surprising given the severity of the problems faced by some, which are not quick to fix; because new learning and skills take time; and because many would have already reduced their consumption as far as possible. It is notable that a clear majority did nevertheless give positive answers to these questions. Telephone calls appeared to be felt to be at least as effective as home visits overall (with more phone call receivers agreeing with the questions, though also more disagreeing). This is a reassuring result, because phone calls are more time efficient so allow more people to be reached, but in the absence of evidence, might be assumed to be less effective. These responses strongly suggest that both types of interaction were broadly successful in developing learning and confidence among householders.



	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I have learned practical information and skills today to help me reduce my energy consumption and costs.			
Telephone calls	77 (62%)	40 (32%)	7 (6%)
Home visits	11 (46%)	13 (54%)	0 (0%)
All events	88 (60%)	53 (36%)	7 (5%)
I feel more confident than before that I can reduce my energy consumption and costs.			
Telephone calls	74 (60%)	40 (32%)	10 (8%)
Home visits	11 (46%)	13 (54%)	0 (0%)
All events	85 (57%)	53 (36%)	10 (7%)

Table 5.9. Short term impacts on households in the Affordable warmth programme (n = 148).

7. Alleviate: longer term household experiences and impacts (EO4.2)

Longer term experiences

The ALLenergy ‘follow-up’ survey contained four retrospective questions about longer term experiences of the programme and was completed by 40 participating households, three to six months after the events that were discussed above. The findings from this survey are shown in Table 5.10. These results provide further evidence that the ALLenergy Affordable Warmth programme was successful in terms of its process. Across these four questions, the level of agreement with the statements is 90% or above. Three to six months after their participation, households in the programme clearly felt that the programme was well-run (90%), that the energy advisors listened and were respectful (93%) and that the programme was adaptable to suit their needs (90%). Finally, 93% of participants agreed that they would recommend the programme to others.



	Agree	Neither	Disagree
The programme was well run.	36 (90%)	3 (8%)	1 (1%)
I felt listened to and respected by the people who were delivering the programme.	37 (93%)	2 (5%)	1 (3%)
The programme was adaptable to suit my needs.	36 (90%)	3 (8%)	1 (1%)
I would recommend the programme to other people who struggle to pay their energy bills.	37 (93%)	2 (5%)	1 (3%)

Table 5.10. Longer-term household experiences of the Affordable Warmth programme (n = 40).

Longer term changes: comparing the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow up’ surveys

Introduction

Longer term impacts of the pilot projects were examined by comparing each household’s responses to a ‘baseline’ survey to their responses to an identical ‘follow-up’ survey. In Allenergy’s pilot, the ‘baseline’ survey was conducted in the initial telephone call to households and the ‘follow-up’ survey was conducted largely by telephone between six and nine months after the main interaction with each household (largely a home visit or telephone consultation). Once the Allenergy baseline and follow-up data had been cleaned and integrated, 40 matched pairs of households were available for analysis. This is around one quarter of the 162 completed baseline surveys and 3% of the 1348 households that participated in the Highland Affordable Warmth programme to May 2024. Differences between the baseline survey data and the follow-up survey data were examined using the Related-samples Wilcoxon signed-rank test, with a confidence level of 90% required to establish significant changes. As discussed earlier, 90% was used due to the relatively small sample sizes. It is important to note that any changes between the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow-up’ surveys cannot be unproblematically attributed to participation in the Affordable Warmth programme. This is because some changes might be due to other factors, such as seasonality, which could not be controlled for.

The results of this analysis are examined in Tables 5.11 to 5.13. These tables show all of the items from the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow-up’ surveys that relate to energy poverty. Items where a statistically significant change was identified, with a 90% level of confidence, are highlighted in green. The tables also show the means for the variables in the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow up’ surveys, as well as the difference between the means. Finally, the tables offer a description of the statistically significant changes.



Paying energy bills

As indicated in Table 5.11, the ALLenergy analysis shows a statistically significant *decrease* in the means between the ‘baseline’ survey and the ‘follow-up’ survey. Notwithstanding the caveat that changes cannot confidently be fully attributed to the programme, this is a positive result that indicates that households reported *less difficulty* paying their energy bills six to nine months following their engagements with the Highland Affordable Warmth programme than they did prior to these engagements.

Self-restriction of energy services

Table 5.11 also shows the results with respect to the self-restriction of access to energy services by householders. The analysis shows a statistically significant *decrease* in the means between the ‘baseline’ survey and follow-up’ responses with respect to seven of the eight the survey items. The only exception is for cooling; given the climate in Scotland, it is not surprising that this item was considered to be not relevant by most survey respondents. With respect to the other seven survey items – heating, cooking, refrigeration, laundry, hot water, lighting and electronic devices – the results indicate that householders were able to exercise *less self-restriction* of access to these energy services following their participation in the ALLenergy programme. This provides further evidence pointing to positive impacts of the ALLenergy Affordable Warmth programme.

Negative impacts of energy struggles

Table 5.12 shows the findings with respect to the negative impacts of challenges with paying for energy. The findings suggest that there were statistically significant changes with respect to feeling of pride in the home and feeling comfortable in the home. In both cases, there is evidence that the negative impact of energy poverty on these phenomena was reduced. In addition, with respect to impacts on physical health and mental health, it is worth touching on the responses to questions on these two topics that were in the ‘follow-up’ survey. The responses to these two questions suggest that 75% of the follow up survey respondents felt that participation in the Affordable Warmth programme had had a positive impact on both the physical health and the mental health of their household.

Energy literacy and know how

Table 5.13 shows the findings with respect to the energy literacy and know-how of the householders. The analysis shows a statistically significant difference with respect to six survey items in the ‘baseline’ and ‘follow-up’ surveys. More specifically, following participation in the ALLenergy Affordable Warmth programme, the findings show a significant positive *increase in householder knowledge or understanding* with respect to: monthly energy consumption or cost, energy bills, energy tariffs, how to contact energy suppliers, how to save energy and home insulation. In addition, the data suggests that households were more confident that they were receiving all of their welfare benefits following engagement with the programme. Given that these findings are less likely to have been impacted by seasonality, they provide further indications of the positive impacts of the ALLenergy programme.



Survey items	Baseline survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
Difficulty affording energy bills. 1: No difficulty; 5 = Great difficulty (n = 39).	4.69	3.00	-1.69	Less difficulty
Self-restriction of access to energy services in order to be able to afford energy bills. 1: Not restricted at all; 5: Restricted to a great extent.				
Heating (n = 40)	4.60	3.30	-1.3	Less self-restriction
Cooking (n = 39)	3.41	2.23	-1.18	Less self-restriction
Refrigeration (switching off fridge or freezer) (n = 38)	1.76	1.15	-0.61	Less self-restriction
Cooling your home	Not relevant. Too few responses			
Doing laundry (n = 39)	3.62	2.33	-1.29	Less self-restriction
Heating hot water (n = 37)	4.18	2.92	-1.26	Less self-restriction
Lighting (n = 40)	3.03	2.02	-1.01	Less self-restriction
Running electronic devices (for example, TVs, computers and phones) (n = 23)	3.35	2.28	-1.07	Less self-restriction

Table 5.11. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the ALLenergy Highland Affordable Warmth programme (paying bills and self-restriction of access to energy services). The green shading indicates variables where statistically significant findings were observed at 90% confidence.

Survey items	Baseline survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
Negative impacts on household of challenges paying for energy: 1: No impact at all; 5: A lot of impact				
Physical health or well-being (n = 40)	3.53	3.67	0.14	-
Mental health (n = 40)	4.35	4.08	-0.27	-
Ability to study at home	Insufficient responses			
Ability to work at home	Insufficient responses			
Ability to have visitors in the home (n = 32)	4.14	3.51	-0.63	-
Feeling of pride in the home (n = 37)	4.19	3.52	-0.67	Less negative impact on pride
Feeling comfortable in the home (n = 39)	4.31	3.70	-0.61	Less negative impact on comfort
Feeling safe and secure in the home (n = 17)	2.04	2.86	0.82	-
Ability to access online/digital communication services ... (n = 33)	2.87	2.62	-0.25	-
Ability to enjoy recreational activities in the home (n = 37)	3.08	2.75	-0.33	-

Table 5.12. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the Allenergy Highland Affordable Warmth programme (negative impacts of problems affording energy). The green shading indicates variables where statistically significant findings were observed at 90% confidence.

Survey items	Baseline survey mean	Follow-up survey mean	Difference between means	Description of change
Extent of agreement with statements: 1 = 'I don't agree at all' and 5 = 'I strongly agree'.				
I know my approximate monthly energy consumption or costs (n = 40)	2.58	3.93	1.35	Greater understanding
I understand my energy bills (n = 29)	2.13	3.41	1.28	Greater understanding
I know that I am on the best energy tariff for me (n = 21)	1.92	3.20	1.28	Greater understanding
I know how to manage my energy bills online (n = 29)	2.03	2.40	0.37	-
I know how to contact my energy supplier (n = 38)	3.58	4.13	0.55	Greater understanding
I know how to save energy in my home (n = 39)	3.03	4.10	1.07	Greater understanding
I know if my home is well insulated or not (n = 18)	2.30	3.28	0.98	Greater understanding
I am confident that I am receiving all benefits/welfare payments that I am entitled to (n = 31)	3.52	4.11	0.59	Greater confidence
I think that my local community is supportive of people who struggle to pay their energy bills (n = 23)	3.07	2.87	-0.20	-
I feel a sense of stigma or shame because of my struggles with energy bills (n = 37)	2.08	2.79	0.71	Greater stigma

Table 5.13. Household responses to the 'baseline survey' and 'follow up' survey in the ALLenergy Highland Affordable Warmth programme (energy literacy and know how). The green shading indicates variables where statistically significant findings were observed at 90% confidence.

As indicated at the foot of Table 5.13 the findings show that the sense of stigma among householders increased between the 'baseline' survey and the 'follow-up' survey. Recalling the finding in the 'engagement' survey that householders generally felt that the programme was conducted in a respectful way, it seems unlikely that the Affordable Warmth programme is directly responsible for this increase. However, it is possible that participation in the programme (discussing challenges with others and applying for 'crisis grants') obliged householders to think about their situation in new and challenging ways that led to this increase, or that over time they accumulated more experience of shame.

Longer term impacts: the follow-up survey

The ALLenergy 'follow-up' survey contained five questions that retrospectively asked households about changes during the period since their participation in the Affordable Warmth project. The results are shown in Table 5.14. The findings from these questions provide further indications of the strengths of the ALLenergy Affordable Warmth programme. The level of agreement with all five of the statements is 70% or above and the level of disagreement is 8% or less. This suggests that the Affordable Warmth programme produced positive impacts in terms of learning about reducing energy consumption and costs, confidence that future energy bills will be lower and that participation in the programme has produced improvements in the physical health and mental health of the household.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I have learned more about how to use less energy through participation in the project.	30 (75%)	9 (23%)	1 (3%)
I have learned more about how to save on the cost of energy through participation in the project.	29 (73%)	10 (25%)	1 (3%)
I think my energy bills will be lower through participation in the project.	28 (70%)	10 (25%)	2 (5%)
Participating in the project has improved the physical health of my household.	30 (75%)	7 (18%)	3 (8%)
Participating in the project has improved the mental health of my household.	30 (75%)	9 (23%)	1 (3%)

Table 5.14. Longer-term household impacts of the Affordable Warmth programme (n = 40).



Limitations on impacts

Although the foregoing material is positive about the impacts of the ALLenergy programme, the ALLenergy team also expressed concerns about the temporary nature of the impacts that they can produce through ‘crisis grants’:

‘It really is firefighting, the amounts of crisis grants that we can access are not life changing amounts in any way. They are usually quite small grants, and often they have to be repeated. They will allow people to switch their heating on for a little while, but then the money will run out again. So, it is a very bad situation.’

8. Energy advisor experiences and impacts (EO4.2)

Given that ALLenergy was working with three new energy advisors and in the context of some new work practices (as described above), it is clearly important to address the experiences of the energy advisors. The experiences of the ALLenergy Highland energy advisors were examined in two ways. First, as in the other relevant pilots, this was done through the ‘energy advisor’ survey. In addition, in the case of ALLenergy, since it was straightforward to conduct an interview in English, this was also done in the form of an interview with the three energy advisors. The responses of the three ALLenergy energy advisors to the ‘energy advisor’ survey are shown in Table 5.15. The findings are positive, with unanimous agreement regarding learning and skills development, enhanced CV and employability, good and flexible project management and feelings of connection to the local community. In addition, two of the three energy advisors agreed that working on the programme had positive impacts on their confidence.

	Agree	Neither	Disagree
I have learned a lot and developed new skills.	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
My confidence has grown.	2 (66%)	1 (33%)	0 (0%)
My CV and employability are enhanced.	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The project was well-run	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Project management team was easy and flexible to work with.	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I feel more connected to my local community.	3 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Table 5.15. Experiences of the ALLenergy energy advisors (n = 3).

The interview with the three energy advisors was revealing in a number of ways. For instance, the interview revealed how shocking it can be for energy advisors to start working with people in energy poverty. This emphasises the need for energy communities to think very carefully about the recruitment, training and welfare of energy advisors. One of the energy advisors described the following experience:

Before doing this, I've gone through my life with blinkers on. I had no idea what was out there. I've been relatively fortunate, it's kind of the first time I've come into this side of these things, and it's an eyeopener to me, to hear these stories, people struggling, and they couldn't put electricity in the meter. And you just thought, "Oh, it's a lot of rubbish, they've got benefits, they've got this, they've got that," and actually they clearly don't! The amount of people I've said to over the last year, when they're saying, "Oh, it must be great, there's no incentive for people to work 'cos they must be making a fortune on benefits" – and don't get me wrong, there's one or two that seem to be coining it in – but as a whole, how they're surviving, I have no idea. And particularly now with energy costs.

Another energy advisor made a very telling comment about the attitudes and actions of energy companies. This comment chimes with previous research that describes the negative experiences of vulnerable households in dealing with organisations including energy companies (George et al., 2011; Grossmann and Trubina, 2021)¹²:

'The biggest eyeopener for me is how the energy companies can behave. The way these big companies treat people is just outrageous, and just the stress that they put people under. The way they talk to people, how rude they are, accusing them of lying, putting the phone down on them, don't contact them back. Just seem to make up figures out of thin air, and then will write them off at the drop of a hat, just 'cos I dropped an email, after a client spent a year in tears, and one email from me and they'll suddenly drop it, and you think, "Well, what's all that about?" And they just assume, everyone's got a smartphone, everyone's got access to the internet.

At the same time, the Allenergy energy advisors also described how a small number of potential clients try to take advantage of the Affordable Warmth service. For example, the energy advisors described situations in which people have debt but are also taking foreign holidays, where people try to get the same support (e.g. applying for 'crisis grant') from more than one of the energy

¹² George, M., C. Graham and L. Lennard (2011) Too many hurdles: information and advice barriers in the energy market, Centre for Consumers and Essential Services, University of Leicester (funded by eaga Charitable Trust).

Grossman, K. and E. Trubina (2021) How the Concept of Dignity Is Relevant to the Study of Energy Poverty and Energy Justice, *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 12 April, 2021.

advisors and difficult situations when the assessment call shows that they are not eligible or appropriate for support from the service.

Regarding their own health and safety, the team also noted that they have a ‘red flag’ process in the referral system to identify households that they *should not visit*; this was particularly an issue for the female energy advisors. The energy advisors also described the ongoing need to avoid the temptation to get more involved in addressing clients’ problems than is appropriate. The team noted that the ALLenergy managers provide valuable support with these issues and commented that the work is ‘rewarding’.

9. Impacts on local partners (EO7)

Although the referral network in the Highland region was made up of more than one person, ALLenergy was able to only share the local partner survey with one referral team manager that they were working with. The quantitative results from this survey are shown in Table 5.16. These responses speak for themselves and are positive. That said, in response to an open-ended question, the manager agreed with ALLenergy’s own conclusion that it takes time for new systems to bed in and for referrals to flow. More positively, the manager described ALLenergy as ‘professional’, ‘dedicated’ and providing a ‘person-centred approach’ that is ‘valuable to households during the “cost of living crisis”’. The manager ‘endorsed’ ALLenergy’s work on energy poverty.

	Agree	Disagree
Positive impact on energy poverty in participating households.	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Positive impact on my own or my organisation’s ability to work on energy poverty.	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Enhanced my own or my organisation’s appreciation of and respect for the challenges faced by households in energy poverty.	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Well-run by ALLenergy.	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Created and/or supported local networks of organisations and individuals working on energy poverty.	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Keen to collaborate on future energy poverty work with ALLenergy.	1 (100%)	0 (0%)

Table 5.16. Feedback from the senior manager of referral teams (n = 1).

10. Impacts on Allenergy: the legacy of the pilot (EO6)

The evidence presented in this chapter shows that the Allenergy pilot project has produced the following impacts and legacies for Allenergy:

1. At the start of the CEES project, Allenergy was reliant on one source of funding: competitive grants. Historically, this had made it challenging for Allenergy to cover core costs and to maintain staffing levels over time. Allenergy now has a much more entrepreneurial and creative approach to funding (including collaborative fund-raising). Over the course of the CEES project, Allenergy has developed a range of knowledge, skills and processes to support a more robust and flexible portfolio of funding sources, including, in addition to grant funding: public donations, corporate donations and contracts for service provision. Looking to the future, Allenergy is in the process of developing further income opportunities by collaboratively setting up a local charity shop/community space and investing in local renewable energy developments.
2. At the beginning of the CEES project, Allenergy's work focused on west Scotland. Through the success of its activities on funding, Allenergy has successfully extended this focus to the Highland region of Scotland and now has a well-established and growing network of organisations across the Highland region that refer households to Allenergy (and to whom Allenergy refer households, as appropriate). In addition, Allenergy has a fully trained team of three energy advisors working very effectively in the Highland region. Further, Allenergy has developed new working practices that are designed to look after the energy advisors' well-being within the context of extensive remote working and the ongoing energy crisis.

11. Key learning from the Allenergy pilot

Preparing for energy solidarity work

1. In terms of recording household information and monitoring households' progress through project processes, by energy advisors, the use of a dedicated Client Management System offers far greater operational and reporting potential than a spreadsheet such as Excel. This can be time-consuming to scope, purchase and set up. The initial set up of a CMS is very important because this will determine the kinds of reports that can easily be produced later on.
2. The Allenergy pilot demonstrates the value of an organisational structure that allows work on energy poverty to be planned and implemented independently of the need for approvals from other internal departments.



Fund

1. While microdonations following the Energie Solidaire model are appropriate for energy communities that have their own customers, this is a very challenging approach for organisations that do not have customers.
2. Although these are time-consuming undertakings, programmes to support public donations, corporate donations and service contracts all have the potential to provide valuable income. Donations can be particularly useful because the income can be flexibly spent across different activities.
3. A broad portfolio of funding sources immediately brings benefits in terms of covering core costs and maintaining staff/service levels over time.

Identify

1. The Allenergy approach offers a very robust model for developing a new referral network and system in a new geographical area. That said, this is a time-consuming process. Further, it takes time for the organisations in the referral network to build trust in a new partner and the knowledge to recognise who to refer and who not to refer.

Alleviate

1. Working as an energy advisor is highly specialised work, requiring a blend of social skills and technical skills. With this in mind, it is important to implement specific processes to recruit and train suitable people.
2. The work of an energy advisor is often emotionally challenging, especially within the context of the energy crisis. To address this concern, processes are needed to take care of energy advisors' well-being and resilience.
3. The Allenergy Affordable Warmth approach provides a robust and effective model for energy poverty alleviation activities. The approach relies on: flexibility between telephone calls and home visits; flexibility between providing energy advice, supporting applications for crisis grants and both; and an understanding and empathetic approach that recognises the challenging circumstances of many households in energy poverty.
4. The evaluation indicates that the Highland Affordable Warmth has been effective in alleviating energy poverty in some respects. Nonetheless, Allenergy itself expresses concerns about the limits to its ability to have a significant and lasting impact on energy poverty within the context of the very high levels of energy poverty across the areas in which it works.