Local Energy Advice Demonstrator (LEAD)

Method Summary

South West NET ZERO HUB

Youth Action at Home

Providing easy resources for self-led home energy surveys, helping young people become 'energy detectives' and influence energy use in their homes

How it works

Young people are supported to conduct their own energy investigations at home, with a set of printable resources and a group approach to motivate and encourage learning. This approach can include anyone from aged 10 into adulthood.

A DIY home energy survey pack can help users to identify things like what type of home they live in, how it's heated and powered, where it loses heat, how to spot problems and solutions to start fixing them. The aim is to be interactive and fun, whilst improving energy literacy in young people and influencing how they and their families use energy at home. Using CSE's 'Sherlock Homes' resource as an example, an activity pack could include:

- A child-friendly survey to help young people investigate energy in their home and spot areas for improvement
- A tips sheet with plenty of photographic examples, to help young people complete the survey for their own home
- A menu of problems they might identify, alongside a mix of easy DIY solutions and relevant retrofit options

Case study

The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) created the 'Sherlock Homes' resource pack for use by Scout groups. This was developed through the **Green Open Homes West LEAD** project when CSE was approached by Axe Scout District, who were interested in hosting a joint event and improving the energy efficiency of their scout hut. As LEAD is aimed at a domestic level, CSE edited their existing DIY home energy survey for Key Stage 2 (ages 7-11) for scouts to complete at home, then share their results at an event with other scouts. The project was pitched as a 'house investigation', leading to the name 'Sherlock Homes'.

Image © Centre for Sustainable Energy

What you'll need

- This resource can be used by individual households, but as a community approach you will need a relationship with a youth group or school
- Young people willing to engage with the 'energy detective' idea
- Someone – an adult or young person – willing to review resources and help explain to the group how to take part, and to follow up on sharing results
- Willingness to put time into exploring any questions arising
- If working with a school or youth group as an outsider, some home energy knowledge to answer basic questions will make the process easier, give the project credibility and help keep young people interested and engaged

Why it works

Older children can have significant influence over environmental matters at home (Toth et al., 2013). UK research has shown that children are motivated to save energy when given responsibility, and caregivers feel more positive about saving energy when seen as educational for their child (Fell and Chiu, 2014).

International studies suggest that caregivers see older children as a credible source of information about home energy (Delmas, Giottonini and Teng, 2024), and children can act as useful 'nudges' to influence caregiver behaviour (Agarwal et al., 2017, Boudet et al., 2016). Socialisation of energy saving, and development of energy literacy, is important to support this influencing role, especially as children reach an age where they become involved in new and more complex household chores that give them agency over energy use (Ikerne Aguirre-Bielschowsky et al., 2018).

Top tips

- ✓ Sessions should be run with sensitivity to a range of home situations: when working with children, their ability to influence energy at home will depend on the attitudes and parenting style of their caregivers, as well as the building they live in, tenancy and household income
- ✓ Consider helping young people monitor changes in home energy use as a result, or look at how their own or caregivers' attitudes have changed
- ✓ This approach easily links to Key Stage 2 curriculum topics at school – but schools can be difficult to engage in projects without personal connections

Resources

- The Sherlock Homes pack for 10-14 year olds is available on CSE's website
- Educational resources: Teaching climate and energy on CSE's website provides free primary school resources including videos and downloads (see Guide for curriculum links)
- Home Energy Advice leaflets on CSE's website can help support learning and give confidence to discuss topics
- Community building audit on CSE's website can assist youth groups wanting to improve their venue
- The Retrofit Basics online course (3 x units, each under an hour long) is on CSE's YouTube channel and can give a deeper understanding to adults and interested older teenagers.
- Other relevant LEAD Toolkit contents (see South West Net Zero Hub website): **Green Open Homes West LEAD** (project summary)
- 'Sherlock Homes' is discussed in the SWNZH LEAD Webinar Series: Innovations in domestic retrofit advice - Retrofit, Engagement and Communication 11 Dec 2024 (51:53 to 53:07) (see also full slides, slide 34)

About LEAD

LEAD is managed by South West Net Zero Hub and funded by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero. The programme is trialling innovative approaches to retrofit advice for hard-to-reach groups and hard-to-treat homes. Find out more here.

Publication date: March 2025