



Campaigning for Warm Homes

Health through Warmth Community Project

HOPE Energy Link

FINAL REPORT



Artwork © by Ruth Whiting, Specialist Project Worker, HOPE Energy Link Project



Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

HOPE Energy Link was designed to tackle fuel poverty and improve the health of the Travellers on the Colne Park site in the London Borough of Hillingdon. HOPE Energy Link is an Npower Health through Warmth Community Fund project. As a pilot project, it aimed to generate and test methods of delivering energy advice to the Gypsy and Traveller community, a group that has had little contact with mainstream energy advice. Similarly, HOPE Energy Link sought to develop ways of working with and engaging excluded communities.

The HOPE Energy Link Project was an extension of the HOPE (Health Opportunities Promotion & Education) Partnership in the Borough. The HOPE Partnership was established to address inequalities in Health Service provision to Refugees and Asylum Seekers, The Traveller Community and Single Homeless People, the most marginalized communities in the Borough.

The London Borough of Hillingdon bid for Npower Health through Warmth monies to pilot methods of improving health by tackling fuel poverty and making affordable warmth accessible to Colne Park with a view to extending this approach across the HOPE Partnership.

A Specialist Project Worker with extensive experience of working with the Gypsy and Traveller community was hired from the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit. The Specialist Project Worker attended the NEA City and Guilds Energy Awareness training as well as a Traveller-specific energy awareness training course designed especially by the Centre for Sustainable Energy in Bristol. With her experience of Traveller culture, the Specialist Project Worker was able to win the trust of the community at Colne Park and make energy and affordable warmth accessible to the Traveller community.

Project activities included conducting a survey of 20 households on the site to assess the thermal comfort of their dwellings, their health status, income and expenditure on fuel. The survey provided a framework within which to deliver individual energy advice, distribute energy saving light bulbs and make Health through Warmth Referrals. An Energy Activity Book was designed for the children on site followed by an energy drawing competition where the children could win solar powered toys. Finally an Energy Advice DVD was recorded with the children on the site to deliver energy advice to the adults.

HOPE Energy Link has helped to improve the health status of the Travellers on site by providing heating to those with no or insufficient heating via the Npower Health through Warmth scheme. The project has also successfully engaged the community in energy and affordable warmth issues and has dramatically increased the level of energy awareness amongst all members of the community including the children. The learning from the project can form the basis of further work with marginalized communities and energy and affordable warmth work the Gypsy and Traveller community.

Fiona Wedderburn
HOPE Energy Link Project Manager

HOPE Energy Link Project Outline

HOPE Energy Link was a pilot project designed to tackle fuel poverty and improve the health of the Traveller community at the Colne Park site in the London Borough of Hillingdon. It was an Npower Health through Warmth Community Fund Project that emerged as an extension of the work of the HOPE (Health Opportunities Promotion and Education) Partnership within the Borough. The HOPE Partnership was established to improve Health Service provision to Refugees and Asylum Seekers, The Traveller Community and the Single Homeless, the most marginalized communities in the Borough. The HOPE Partnership consists of Specialist Health Workers and other organisations that dedicate time and resources to these excluded communities to improve their health status. The HOPE Energy Link Project was a response to reports from these Specialist Health Workers about cold trailers, fuel debt and poor health on the Colne Park Site.

Being a pilot project, HOPE Energy Link sought to develop ways of working with very marginalized communities and document the learning acquired as best practice guidelines both for those working in the wider HOPE Partnership and any organisation wishing to work with excluded groups. HOPE Energy Link also aimed to generate and test methods for delivering energy advice to the Gypsy and Traveller community. This group has had little contact with mainstream energy advice because mainstream energy advice literature is generally not relevant to trailers¹ and utility blocks, because many of the adults have not had a formal education and because the Traveller community is separated from the wider community around them.

HOPE Energy Link sought to overcome the marginalization of the Traveller community by hiring a Specialist Project Worker with extensive experience of working with the Gypsy and Traveller community. She had previously managed to engage these communities in a wide range of activities including learning to drive, to use a computer and take part in sporting events. In view of the cultural differences between the Traveller and other communities and the fact that the Traveller community tends to be distrustful of outside agencies and organisations, it was felt that someone with experience of and cultural sensitivity to the Traveller community would be in a position to win their trust.

The Specialist Project Worker was instrumental in making energy and affordable warmth accessible to the Gypsy and Traveller community. She attended an NEA City & Guilds Energy Awareness training course, a Traveller specific energy awareness course designed by the Centre for Sustainable Energy as well as undertaking Npower Health through Warmth training. With her specialist knowledge of Traveller culture, the Specialist Project Worker was able to pass on what she had learnt using language and concepts appropriate to the Traveller community.

The initial aim of the HOPE Energy Link Project was to win the trust of the community at Colne Park. Members of the Hillingdon Traveller Education Service who were already working successfully with the families on site facilitated introductions. Once the community knew the Specialist Project Worker, a focus group was held at the Hillingdon Traveller Women's Group. The aim of this focus group was to ask those present for permission to begin the project, gauge the level of energy awareness in the community and ascertain what energy issues are pertinent on site. Those attending this consultation event engaged well with energy issues and invited the Specialist Project Worker to conduct fuel poverty surveys with their

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The HOPE Energy Link Project used a survey to collect data about the extent of fuel poverty on the site by asking questions about thermal comfort, health, income and expenditure on fuel. The survey also constituted a framework within which each household could receive energy saving light bulbs and talk openly and privately about their energy issues. Tailored energy and income maximisation advice could then be provided as a response to these issues and Health through Warmth referrals could be made.

The results of the survey showed that every household spent more than 10% of their income on heating and was therefore in some degree of fuel poverty. Many households were in extreme fuel poverty because of the combination of the high cost of Calor gas and their trailers, unlike new models of trailers, are thermally inefficient. The survey also showed a high incidence of health problems especially respiratory problems on the site and that most households had difficulty keeping warm.

The HOPE Energy Link Project also aimed to specifically involve the children on the site because Traveller communities are oriented around the welfare of their children and because many of the older children would soon have their own trailer. A Colne Park Energy Savers Activity Book was designed for the children and piloted with children visiting the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit. The activity book was followed by an energy drawing competition whereby the winners could win solar powered toys. The children were also involved in filming an energy advice DVD for the adults. Written energy advice materials would not have been accessible to the adults on site many of whom had no formal education. Therefore the children were filmed passing on the energy advice they had learnt from doing the Energy Activity Book.

The HOPE Energy Link Project has contributed towards improving the health status of the households living on the Colne Park site by providing those with no heating or insufficient heating with electric heating. HOPE Energy Link was also particularly successful at engaging the whole community and drastically increasing the level of energy awareness. In the longer term, the project strengthened links and partnership working within both within the HOPE partnership and the other organisations working with the Traveller community. It has also raised awareness about energy and the effect of cold and damp housing on health amongst these organisations that are now in a position to continue with the work started by HOPE Energy Link. A local advice centre will now continue to make health referrals for residents on site and continue with the income maximisation work undertaken by the Specialist Project Worker. The learning about delivering energy advice to and working with marginalized communities is being written up and will hopefully inform further projects.

HOPE Energy Link Project Outcomes

A set of key outcomes was developed against which to measure the project's effectiveness at tackling fuel poverty. These are listed below with an indication of the extent to which these outcomes were realised. The HOPE Energy Link Project succeeded in achieving all of its aims.

- **Number of successful grant applications made by the travellers**

14 Health through Warmth Referrals were made on behalf of vulnerable households with no or insufficient heating in their trailers. To date this has resulted in 17 temporary electric heaters being delivered to the site. Arrangements are currently being made to install smoke alarms for each household. Further actions on these 14 referrals have been postponed until the latest changes to the Warm Front Grant Scheme are announced. It is hoped that these changes will include funding extensions to the gas network. The pub next to the site is connected to the mains gas network and extending the gas supply to the site would greatly reduce heating costs because the households on the site are currently paying on average £27 a week for bottled LPG alone.

- **Number of households that have been given energy advice**

32 households have been given energy advice including 3 housed Traveller families.

- **Whether the Traveller's utility costs have been reduced**

The current site Warden who took up the post in January 2005 just prior to the HOPE Energy Link Project starting conducted a review of the electricity tariff for the site and subsequently changed the tariff from 9p per unit to 6p. This greatly reduced the resident's fuel bills. A significant change of tariff just before the beginning of the project has made it difficult to monitor the impact of the energy saving light bulbs being installed and the energy advice that was given. However, from the way the energy advice was taken on board it can be deduced that this will have lowered fuel bills. Further monitoring of bills over a longer period would provide more substantial evidence that the energy advice and light bulbs had worked.

- **Number of households that have received assistance with benefits claims**

The HOPE Energy Link Specialist Project Worker has assisted 9 households with benefits claims. The assistance was primarily explaining and processing paperwork on behalf of those with poor literacy skills. The Specialist Project Worker also strengthened links with the Bell Farm Christian Centre who do benefits work with the Traveller community. Bell Farm have recently expanded their benefits advice capacity and the Specialist Project Worker ensured that all households were made aware of the ongoing support with benefits claims that is available through Bell Farm.

- **Numbers of partnership professionals, volunteers trained in providing energy advice**

1 HOPE Energy Link Specialist Project Worker undertook the NEA City and Guilds Energy Awareness training
A further 18 members of the HOPE partnership, Bell Farm Christian Centre and Hillingdon Traveller Education Service were given health referral scheme training with an energy advice component incorporated.

- **Numbers of referrals received as a result of training**

14 to date

- **Completion of feasibility study for Colne Park**

HOPE Energy Link incorporated an energy audit of the site to assess the scope for installing renewable energy measures after the HOPE Energy Link Specialist Project Worker has raised awareness about energy issues on the site. However, it was learnt that Hillingdon Homes, the Arms Length Management Organisation responsible for managing all Hillingdon Council

Double glazing for the utility blocks
Loft insulation
External plugs so that residents no longer need to run leads from their utility blocks through their open windows to their trailers
Ceramic infra red heaters
Heating controls
Photovoltaics to supply electricity for lighting and appliances such as fridges and radios
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stock including the utility blocks at Colne Park, were submitting a bid to the ODPM (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister) for monies to repair and improve the utility blocks. Therefore, the energy audit was brought forward and the following recommendations were made:

Unfortunately the energy audit report narrowly missed the deadline for submission to Hillingdon Homes. It is hoped that some of the measures such as double glazing and heating will be covered by the bid anyway. The outcome of the bid is currently awaited.

- **Total additional funding attracted to the borough (committed and possible)**

To date £1,153.85 was spent on temporary heating and delivery. Further expenditure is possible through Warm Front depending on which new measures are announced as part of the changes to the scheme.

Double glazing for the utility blocks

Loft insulation

External plugs so that residents no longer need to run leads from their utility blocks through their open windows to their trailers

Ceramic infra red heaters

Heating controls

Photovoltaics to supply electricity for lighting and appliances such as fridges and radios

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HOPE Energy Link Project Outputs

The following table lists the key quantifiable outcomes of the HOPE Energy Link Project:

Double glazing for the utility blocks

Loft insulation

External plugs so that residents no longer need to run leads from their utility blocks through their open windows to their trailers

Ceramic infra red heaters

Heating controls

Photovoltaics to supply electricity for lighting and appliances such as fridges and radios

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PR opportunities realised by the HOPE Energy Link Project

The scope for PR opportunities in the media is limited in a project of this kind. A brief article outlining the project activities for the children will be sent to Traveller's Times, a magazine for Gypsies and Travellers and those who work with this community. Articles about the project activities and method of working are also being produced for the NEA members newsletter and the Energy Saving Trust's Practical Help newsletter.

The PR for this project focussed on providing guidelines for those intending to work with marginalized communities based on the best practice developed in this project. Similarly, guidance on how to provide energy advice to the Gypsy and Traveller community has been written up in conjunction with an energy advice DVD filmed with the children on site. This DVD is data protected and is for reference purposes only. However, it may be used as an example upon which to base further energy advice work with the Gypsy and Traveller communities on the condition that no part of the DVD is copied.

Key achievements of the HOPE Energy Link Project

• Winning the trust of the Traveller community

As Gypsy and Traveller communities tend not to trust outside agencies and organisations, building a relationship of trust between the HOPE Energy Link Specialist Project Worker and the residents at Colne Park was key to securing any project outcomes. The following factors contributed to winning the trust of the community:

1. Hiring a Specialist Project Worker with extensive previous experience of working with and engaging Gypsy and Traveller communities in sports, learning to drive and various other activities. Trust was established through cultural awareness and demonstrating a sensitivity to the Traveller's needs and circumstances.
2. A flexible and dedicated way of working. The HOPE Energy Link Project design incorporated flexibility into the Specialist Project Worker's work schedule as opposed to having a strict time plan with targets to meet. The Specialist Project Worker was hired for the sole purpose of alleviating fuel poverty on Colne Park. This dedication and flexibility allowed the Specialist Project Worker to spend some time with each individual household, respond to their questions and issues they raised and build trust in this way.
3. Keeping promises and producing realistic expectations. The Specialist Project Worker was rigorous in ensuring that the community's expectations of the project were realistic. She was also careful to ensure that any promises she made produced the goods or services in question. Once the promised energy saving light bulbs, heaters and repeat visits to assist with bills or benefits paperwork materialised trust in the project increased immensely.

The HOPE Energy Link Project established the trust of the community at Colne Park in a very short time. This allowed activities such as the HOPE Fuel Poverty Survey, activity book and energy advice DVD to take place.

- **Level of involvement of the Traveller community in energy issues**

The initial meetings with the Hillingdon Traveller Women's Group demonstrated a high level of interest in energy amongst the women attending. They were keen to talk about their own circumstances relating to energy, participated in an energy quiz (**Appendix A**) and were happy for a survey to be conducted with their household. In total 20 households on site allowed the HOPE Energy Link Specialist Project Worker to conduct the HOPE Fuel Poverty Survey with them. They were willing to allow the Specialist Project Worker to make referrals on their behalf. They welcomed the activity book, prize giving ceremony and allowed a DVD to be filmed with their children on the site.

- **Increased awareness of energy issues amongst the Traveller community**

The initial Focus Group demonstrated varying levels of awareness about energy issues and highlighted the need for energy awareness work. As the project progressed, the Specialist Project Worker saw a marked increase in the level of energy awareness amongst the households on site, particularly with regard to the use of appliances and how health is linked to warmth.

- **Level of enthusiasm amongst the children on the site**

As Traveller communities tend to be oriented around the welfare of the children in the community, the HOPE Energy Link Project sought to involve the children as much as possible. The children on site were willing participants in the activity book, drawing competition and energy advice DVD.

- **Increased awareness of energy issues amongst the children**

A very rewarding feature of this project was observing how quickly the children responded to the educational aspect of the Energy Activity Book. Their increased energy awareness is manifest in the completed activity books, the drawings produced for the competition (**see Appendix D**) and also in their contributions to the DVD. This awareness will be passed on their parents as the children have been encouraged to help their parents be more energy efficient. This awareness will have lasting benefits to the older children on site who, as is custom in Traveller communities, are likely to be soon starting a family and living in their own trailers.

- **Links and partnership working strengthened**

The HOPE Energy Link Project strengthened links and partnership working within the HOPE Partnership and those working with Travellers such as the Bell Farm Christian Centre.

- **Awareness of energy and affordable warmth increased across the HOPE Partnership, Hillingdon Traveller Education Service and Bell Farm Christian Centre**

Through its partnership working and Health through Warmth training, the HOPE Energy Link Project has increased awareness about affordable warmth and the link between cold and damp housing and poor health. This awareness increases the sustainability of the project as, subject to their capacity to do so, the partner organisations involved in HOPE Energy Link will be incorporating energy and affordable warmth into their strategy and operations.

Problems and issues encountered by HOPE Energy Link

The short duration of this project hindered the collection of longitudinal data to demonstrate whether the project had been effective. The rationale behind this project was verbal evidence of fuel poverty provided by the HOPE partnership and Hillingdon Traveller Education Service. Site visits and the survey corroborated the verbal evidence of fuel poverty. Ideally, fuel bills, health and fuel consumption would have been monitored for a year before the project and for a year afterwards to track the changes across the seasons and, taking into account differences in weather patterns over the two years, compare the results for each year. Instead this project had to be a snapshot of fuel poverty on the Colne Park site.

Due to staff changes at the London Borough of Hillingdon, the duration of the project was shortened to 4 months which meant that training, building trust, conducting the surveys, delivering energy advice, distributing the activity book, holding the competition had to be executed very rapidly with no margin for error. A recommendation from the Specialist Project Worker who worked very hard to ensure the completion of all the project activities within the deadline is that working part-time over 6-8 months would have been better than full-time over 4 months. A longer duration would have allowed the trust that was established to be consolidated and the energy advice that was given to be reiterated. Ultimately, this project achieved its goals despite being hurriedly implemented. This was largely due to careful planning, the experience and dedication of the Specialist Project Worker and a lot of hard work.

A problem with a project of this kind was finding a suitable Specialist Project Worker. Locally, the organisations working with the Traveller community in Hillingdon did not have the capacity to undertake the 4 months work required. The search for a suitable Specialist Project Worker was therefore extended across the London area. In the end, the ideal candidate was found at the London Gypsy and Traveller Unit who had the capacity to release one of their staff for this project. The London Gypsy and Traveller Unit is based in Hackney and over 20 miles away from the site. This cost the Specialist Project Worker a considerable amount of time and energy in using public transport to get from Hackney to the site and from the site across the borough to the HOPE partnership where she was based for office tasks.

HOPE Energy Link Exit Strategy

An exit strategy was built into the project design to ensure sustainability and increase the belief of marginalized communities in the ability of projects to deliver aims on a long-term basis. Bell Farm Christian Centre were involved from the start to ensure that when the project finishes Travellers can still visit the Centre for advice and referrals. Bell Farm provides advice and support to all residents in the West Drayton area including the Traveller community. Bell Farm had just employed two new Advice Workers when the project started and now have the capacity to support the residents on Colne Park with benefits claims after the project finishes. Bell Farm have also been giving Health through Warmth training and have links with Hillingdon Council's Energy Team. This means that referrals can be made and any queries can be followed up.

The HOPE Energy Link Specialist Project Worker also conducted a handover to Bell Farm outlining the referrals made so far, details of the benefits work conducted and an explanation of the any other issues that emerged during the course of the project.

The only provision that is not available will be energy advice. For this purpose the energy advice DVD has been produced and should any issue arise that Bell Farm cannot resolve they have the number of the Energy Efficiency Officer at Hillingdon Council who will be able to provide the necessary support.

Replication of HOPE Energy Link

This project found that there was a definite need for the provision energy and affordable warmth advice to Gypsy and Traveller communities. It also demonstrated that this advice can be very well received.

The report entitled "Working with Marginalized Communities: Lessons from the HOPE Energy Link Project" was written specifically to provide detailed guidelines for those working specifically with Gypsy and Traveller communities and more generally with marginalized communities. The report entitled "Delivering Energy Advice to Gypsies and Travellers" was written specifically as a guide to giving energy advice to the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

In summary, these reports make the following key recommendations:

- **Choice of Project Worker**

The choice of Project Worker is key to ensuring the success of any project that works with marginalized communities. Experience of living in or working with these communities is essential. These experiences must also be positive ones. It is important to interview the Project Worker and ascertain the nature of their experience. Evidence of whether they have been able to win the trust of the community and the types of activities undertaken is essential. Here the distinction between doing things for the community and doing things with the community is important. It is essential to assess the extent to which they have involved the community. A potential difficulty is that those with the right kind and level of experience are not easy to find.

- **Relevance**

Any project working with excluded communities must understand both the culture of that particular community and the reasons why this community has been excluded. In this way, a project can be designed that is culturally sensitive and accessible.

Links with the London Health through Warmth scheme

The local Health through Warmth scheme had already received a referral from one of the Health Visitors working with the families at Colne Park and was eagerly awaiting the start of the HOPE Energy Link Project because they had already experienced the difficulties in locating contractors who are willing work on the site. As a result links between Health through Warmth and HOPE Energy Link were established very quickly.

Links were also easy to establish because, as a trained Health through Warmth trainer, the Energy Efficiency Officer at Hillingdon was able to provide the Specialist Project Worker with Health through Warmth training. The HOPE Energy Link Specialist Project Worker was a keen referrer and a partnership soon developed between the local Health through Warmth Scheme and the project.

A total of 14 Health through Warmth referrals were made which resulted in the delivery of 17 emergency electric heaters for those with no or insufficient heating in their trailers. The Specialist Project Worker met the contractors who were delivering electric heaters to the site as they arrived and the heaters were successfully installed. Arrangements are currently being made with the Fire Brigade for smoke alarms to be installed for each of the households on the site.

Links between the local Health Referral Scheme and the site will continue as Bell Farm, the HOPE Partnership and the Traveller Education Service have been trained and will make any further referrals that are required.

Feedback on effectiveness of HOPE Energy Link

The prize-winning pictures in Appendix D demonstrate both the children's enthusiasm and their learning about energy. The drawing competition and activity books were arranged according to the 3 age categories with appropriate levels of difficulty. The drawings show an increase in energy awareness amongst all 3 age groups including the 4-6 year olds.



This picture shows children leaning on the Specialist Project Worker's car to complete their Energy Activity Books.



This is the prize giving ceremony at which the winners of the Colne Park Energy Savers Drawing competition were given solar powered toys.



Every child who participated in the Colne Park Energy Savers Activity book and/or drawing competition was given a certificate and concession prize.



This is Ruth Whiting, Specialist Project Worker and Jane Cook, Specialist Health Visitor. The HOPE Energy Link Project was based on effective partnership working and has strengthened links between the organisations involved in the project.

A Colne Park Energy Savers DVD was produced with the children at Colne Park for the adults. HOPE Energy Link successfully obtained permission from the parents to film the children on the site explaining where energy comes from and providing energy advice. As many of the adults on the site have not had a formal education, this DVD replaces the provision of energy advice literature. This DVD is data protected and may under no circumstances be copied or shown to a public audience. It is a pilot project and can be used for reference purposes only as an example for developing further energy advice materials for the Gypsy and Traveller communities.

Due to technical difficulties the DVD will be sent to all recipients of this report upon completion.

Quotes from project partners

The following quotes from the project partners highlight the success of the HOPE Energy Link Project and demonstrate that its outcomes were achieved through the way in which it related to and engaged with the Traveller community:

“The project plan was well thought out and sensitive to the wider issues [of working with Travellers] that are often overlooked [for example not being able to adhere to a strict timetable of work]. This flexibility contributed greatly to the success of the project and allowed greater inclusiveness and work to take place that will have a longer term impact through including all ages down to younger children and teenagers.”

Ruth Whiting, London Gypsy and Traveller Unit

“The families liked Ruth Whiting, they were impressed with her as a person because she was open, friendly, helpful and understood the issues. They also liked her because she delivered on her promises, when she said that she would provide energy saving light bulbs, heaters and help them with their bills, she actually came back to do just that.”

Sally Chandler, Hillingdon Traveller Education Service

“The families felt valued and that they were being consulted and listened to. Decisions were made for them by them as opposed to being made by someone else for them. For example it was always stressed that they did not have to do anything they didn't want to do.”

Amanda Lawes, Hillingdon Traveller Education Service

“There have been immediate benefits which will have an impact on people's health, but there is also a longer term impact from this work”.

Jane Cook, Specialist Health Visitor with the HOPE Partnership