

LAURA SANDYS MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



The Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP
Minister of State
Department of Energy and Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
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29 July 2013

Dear Greg

Last year, you asked me to chair the Green Deal Hard to Reach Audiences Panel. The Panel was asked to consider how best to communicate to and engage these audiences to improve the energy efficiency of their homes helped by the Green Deal / Energy Company Obligation framework.

The Panel met on three occasions and heard views from a range of government, industry, trade association and other sources.

I am pleased to attach our report which summarises these views. It goes on to set out recommendations for DECC and other government departments to consider.

Overall, Panel members found a strong consensus on the best approaches and consequently they emphasise the importance of using existing trusted channels of communication.

These channels include local authorities, charities, and community groups, advisors such as Citizens Advice, and friends / family. There are also some important opportunities to communicate through other government departments' programmes.

In terms of next steps, your officials suggest that the report is published on DECC's gov.uk pages in early September when Parliament returns, and that this could be accompanied by a blog. They also indicate that an initial response from DECC will be prepared to accompany the report.

I will also write to the appropriate Ministers in other government departments (DWP, DH) enlisting their support and would very much welcome your support with this cross departmental approach.

Finally, the Panel members and I would be delighted to meet with you to discuss our findings.

Yours ever

Laura

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12 October 2013

Dear Laura,

Thank you for sending me the report from the panel you chaired which explored how best to engage with Hard to Reach audiences on the Green Deal.

The recommendations made by the panel are clear and highly constructive. You stress the very important role that we will be played by a wide variety of organisations that already have trusted relationships with people – I could not agree more.

I am pleased to note that my Department has taken on board much of the general advice given and are also making progress against the more detailed suggestions made. This includes areas where co-operation with other Government Departments is essential.

Please find attached a summary pulling out your recommendations outlining our initial response and progress to date. There is much still to be done to ensure that the audiences identified in your report fully benefit from this Government's policies to improve properties, helping with energy bills and contributing to our carbon reduction targets.

I would like to close by thanking you for having taken on the role of chair – and would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to all your panellists.

Yours Ever,

INITIAL RESPONSE FROM DECC TO PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Panel Recommendation - overall	Panel - specific recommendations	DECC progress
<p>Local Authorities DECC need to recognise the key role that local authorities will play in identifying and communicating with hard to reach households. DECC should work with closely with Local Authorities and the LGA to:</p>	<p>Encourage the energy suppliers and other organisations active on the Green Deal to work with local authorities and community groups to help identify eligible groups and to raise awareness of the Green Deal and ECO.</p>	<p>DECC recognise the critical role that Local Authorities and communities will play in improving the energy efficiency of homes. Our go-early programmes (Core Cities and Pioneer Places) has been followed up by Green Deal Streets , a £20m programme inviting Local Authorities to propose local street-by-street installation projects, working with energy suppliers or others to use linked Green Deal and ECO funding.</p> <p>DECC is working with suppliers to update some initial work done in 2011 on identifying small geographic areas where gas use is higher than expected given the socio demographics of the area. This will aid the targeting of energy efficiency measures at areas which would most benefit. DECC has also funded development of the Plan Local Green Deal toolkit designed by Centre for Sustainable Energy to support communities. An Open Homes Network to be launched this autumn will support Local Authorities/ communities who want to start up an open home network ande events locally.</p>
	<p>Encourage local Health and Wellbeing boards to consider the role the Green Deal and ECO can play within their overall Health and Wellbeing strategies in helping those most in need stay warm.</p>	<p>Many LAs are already linking their health objectives with improvements in energy efficiency. For example, a number of councils linked Green Deal Pioneer Places and Fuel Poverty funding with Department of Health Warm Homes Healthy People funding to deliver improvements to vulnerable households.</p> <p>Many 2013 reports from councils under the Home Energy Conservation Act also highlight</p>

		<p>strong local health partnerships. DECC is looking at the opportunities to highlight further the importance of enabling households to keep warm at an affordable cost and the associated health and wellbeing benefits.</p>
<p>Working with other Government departments DECC should continue to explore ways in which they can work with other government departments to communicate the benefits of improving the energy efficiency of properties and how the Green Deal and ECO can help.</p>	<p>DECC must work with Department of Work and Pensions to make information and the helpline number available through existing communications channels. Most importantly, for the elderly, Winter Fuel Payment letters and Cold Weather Payment alerts should be considered a priority as the policy focus is so closely linked to energy efficiency</p>	<p>DECC and DWP continue to explore opportunities in this area. It has proved far from straightforward to make changes to Winter Fuel Payment letters. However we have included comms in the Warm Home Discount (WHD) letters that go to Pension Credit recipients and this winter, the WHD call centre will signpost customers to ESAS for ECO Affordable Warmth support where they are likely to be eligible. We are also actively exploring the option to include messages in the DWP information leaflets which accompany benefit award letters.</p>
	<p>Data on those receiving Pensions Credit is available to Warm Home Discount obligated energy companies via the innovative data-matching arrangement with DWP (1.1 million customers identified for the energy suppliers in 11/12). If this approach has been effective, DECC should consider whether there are other data sharing approaches that can allow ECO to be fulfilled as cost effectively as possible.</p>	<p>This is an effective and award winning approach and is expected to deliver well over 1m Warm Home Discount Core Group rebates in 2013/14. DWP data matching is already used as part of ECO Affordable Warmth through the referral service provided by ESAS, where customers specifically provide consent for data to be shared. We recognise the potential benefits of data sharing when used securely in the right situations and, with DWP, we are currently exploring whether there may be further opportunities for data sharing to support ECO Affordable Warmth delivery. Significant legal, security and practical issues need to be considered and we are still in the very early stages of doing so.</p>
	<p>DECC must continue to work with</p>	<p>DECC will continue to work with</p>

	Department for Health (and the broader NHS) to make sure that campaigns around winter health include messages about warm, comfortable homes and how DECC policies can help.	colleagues in the Department of Health and Public Health England to ensure information on the support available from DECC policies is included in relevant campaigns and messaging.
Privately Rented Sector DECC should ensure that:	The department moves to consult on scope and structure for planned minimum standards for privately rented properties as soon as possible as these will help uptake of the Green Deal amongst some of the hardest to reach properties.	In order to help the Government develop the detail for any proposals for minimum standards, two advisory forums have been set up, one for the residential sector ¹ , and one for the non-residential sector ² . These groups comprise leading landlord, tenant, environmental and property professional organisations and have been meeting monthly since February 2013, providing expert feedback and views on how the regulations could apply.
	Private Rented Sector Landlords and Housing Associations fully understand the Green Deal. Activity could include running seminars, providing materials and Ministerial involvement to encourage action.	We have regular engagement with Private Rented Sector landlord associations, through our work in the PRS regulation advisory group, the Maximising Energy Efficiency Forum, bi-lateral discussions and events. We have provided clarity to key stakeholders as to our intentions for the PRS regulations and the application and benefits of the Green Deal in the sector.
	Green Deal and ECO have a champion within the Private Rented Sector e.g. the National Landlord Association or an individual appointed by DECC.	We have regular engagement with Private Rented Sector landlord associations, through our work in the PRS regulation advisory group, the Maximising Energy Efficiency Forum, bi-lateral discussions and events. We have provided clarity to key stakeholders as to our intentions for the PRS regulations and the application and benefits of the Green Deal in the sector.
Communications	DECC must work with a wide	We agree completely. The new

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/working-group-on-the-domestic-private-rented-sector-prs-regulations>

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/policy-advisory-groups/working-group-on-the-non-domestic-private-rented-sector-prs-regulations#contact-details>

	<p>range of partner organisations to reach these households. These are identified within the body of this report.</p>	<p>Green Deal Communities £20m fund recognises this and encourages Local Authorities to work with communities and other trusted organisations on street by street improvements.</p>
	<p>Communication of the Green Deal by Government needs to be simple and easy to understand, accurate and consistent.</p>	<p>DECC has produced Quick Guides explaining the Green Deal available on gov.uk/greendeal. Impartial advice is available to all from the Energy Saving Advice service helpline</p>
	<p>DECC should develop a central web site providing information and access to the Green Deal.</p>	<p>Information and access to the Green Deal is provided through gov.uk/greendeal web pages which has had over 2.8 million views since the Jan 2013 launch of the Green Deal. There have also been over 1 million views of the of the search tool that helps consumers find a Green Deal company.</p>
	<p>Messaging must cover both the Green Deal and ECO, and explain clearly how each works. Messages must balance marketing needs with ensuring that consumers are made aware of the implications of Green Deal elements that are pertinent to these households, such as energy usage being indicated as low in the Occupancy Assessment, or the size of potential early repayment fees</p>	<p>We continue to work on improving our messaging across both the Green Deal and ECO and agree that the right balance needs to be found between encouraging people to act and ensuring that they are well protected.</p>