

Building trust in clean heat with engagement and advice – what’s needed next?

The [Electrify Heat campaign](#) – a coalition of energy suppliers, heat pump manufacturers, heat pump systems designers and installers, consumer interest groups, green finance organisations, distribution network operators and trade bodies – has identified three priority areas to get on track to meet the UK’s heat pump targets: training, trust and tariffs. This paper considers the second of these: building consumer trust in clean heat solutions through public engagement and reliable, consistent and tailored advice.

The clean heat transition cannot take place without households being informed, but recent [research for BEIS found](#) that levels of understanding are low. A lack of consistent and tailored information on maintenance and servicing represents a barrier, especially for people in vulnerable circumstances. Consumer advice must be presented in a way that considers people’s individual needs and requirements and must include consideration of different consumers’ digital skills and internet access. Policy changes, such as the phase-out of fossil fuel heating, must be clearly communicated; and available funding opportunities should be easily accessible and understandable.

Currently, the availability of advice on heat decarbonisation is inconsistent and often inadequate. Good progress has been made with [Home Energy Scotland](#), but elsewhere in the UK there is a need to ensure households have access to consistent, comprehensive and independent support that can help them make decisions as they move to low carbon heating.

When done right, the benefits are clear. Home Energy Scotland helps more than 90,000 customers in Scotland every year. 69% of total savings achieved by customers can be directly attributed to the advice provided. This means an average lifetime saving of 4.3 tonnes CO₂ (and £1,600) per customer. With energy prices rising and fuel poverty increasing, it has never been more important for people to be aware of the energy saving measures they can take, and the long-term solutions available to make their homes more efficient, cheaper and greener to run.

Our recommendations

We call on the Government to support a nationwide green homes awareness and information campaign and to roll out high-quality advice and support on heat pumps to help households take the right steps at the right time. We recommend that the government should:

- **Start a nationwide engagement and communications campaign, supported by local actors and activities:** A green homes awareness campaign would build the public’s understanding of what they can do to lower emissions and heat their homes efficiently, accompanied with information on forthcoming regulatory changes and support available (financial and non-financial) locally. It could also raise awareness of government-backed standards, such as PAS 2035.

- An area-based approach, delivered within a consistent framework, could be beneficial given the regional differences associated with the UK's building stock – from off-grid rural properties, to blocks of flats in cities.
- **Create a comprehensive, tailored nationwide advice service across the UK:** The government should establish a consistent, independent and impartial service to support households make informed decisions that are right for them. This should build on the Home Energy Scotland model, where consumers can access a wealth of information easily in person, over the phone and online. Households can be connected with local installers, retrofit co-ordinators and delivery partners and access local networks of skilled and trusted businesses compliant with government-backed standards like PAS and bodies like TrustMark and MCS.
- **Expand the [Simple Energy Advice website](#)** to become a central information resource, providing additional information on consumer protection and installation processes. Toolkits and guides should be offered through this platform to support relevant organisations – such as local authorities, energy and utility companies and financial institutions – to effectively engage people in a consistent manner.
- **Accelerate recommendations from the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Action Plan** to better account for the carbon savings associated with heat pumps.
- **Support the roll-out of digital tools** such as [Building Renovation Plans](#) to provide tailored, sequenced advice to homeowners. To enable this service, government must ensure a consistent approach to green homes data.

Outcomes and benefits

Making consistent and reliable consumer advice on clean heat easily available would bring several important benefits. It would:

- **Accelerate the transition to net zero** by lowering information barriers and increasing the uptake of green homes measures. Customers supported by Home Energy Scotland in 2019/20 will achieve total attributed lifetime savings of 59,200tCO₂ and lifetime financial benefits of £24.92 million.
- **Increase the uptake of available funding.** Advice and support would accelerate the take up of available funding schemes, such as the Boiler Upgrade Scheme, and match the right homes with right measures – as Home Energy Scotland does.
- **Invigorate the supply market**, boosting green jobs and industries.
- **Return on investment** is high, with relatively low upfront costs associated with awareness-raising campaigns and provision of advice for households.